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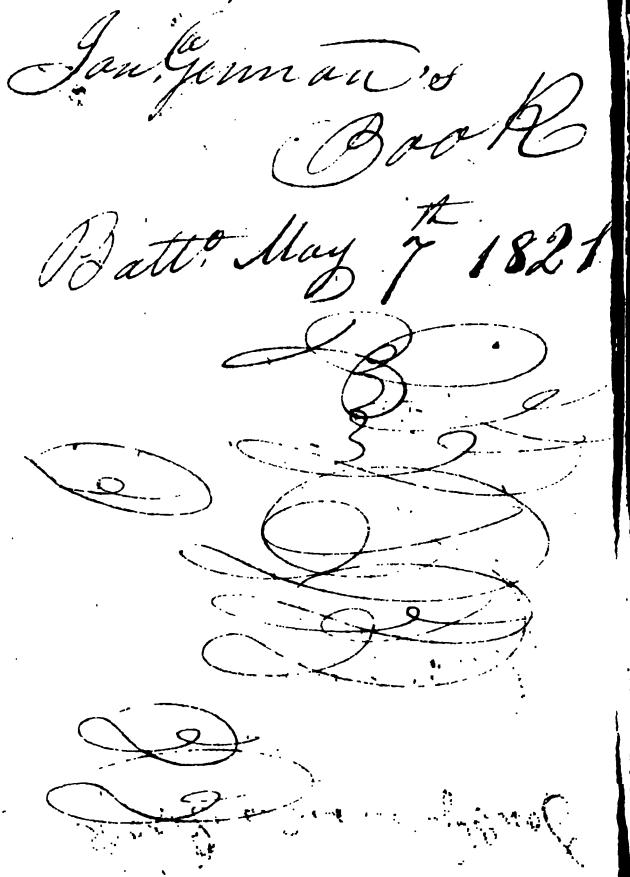

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BATTLE OF NIAGARA,

A POEM,

WITHOUT NOTES;

AND

GOLDAU,

OR

THE MANIAC HARPER.

"Eagles! and Stars! and Rainbows!"

BY JEHU O'CATARACT,
Author of Keep Cool, &c.

(John Neal)

BALTIMORE:
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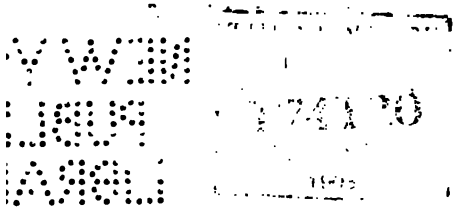


DISTRICT OF MARYLAND, ss.

BE IT REMEMBERED, that on the 22d day of August, in the forty-third year of the Independence of the United States of America, Nathaniel G. Maxwell, of the said District, hath deposited in this office, the Title of a Book, the right whereof he claims as proprietor, in the words following, to wit:

"Battle of Niagara, a Poem, without notes; and Goldau, or the Maniac Harper. 'Eagled and Stars! and Rainbows!' By Jehu O'Cataract, author of Keep Cool, &c."

In conformity to an act of Congress of the United States, entitled, "An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned"; and also to the act, entitled "An Act, supplementary to the act, entitled an Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts and Books to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned; and extending the benefit thereof to the art of designing, engraving and etching historical and other prints."

PHILLIP MOORE,
Clerk of the District of Maryland.

TO THE READER,

This was written when I was a prisoner; when I *felt* the victories of my countrymen. I have attempted to do justice to to American scenery and American character, not to versify the minutiæ of battles—not to give names, titles, or geographical references for my authority, for all these may be found in the *newspapers* of the day.

For its faults and I feel they are numerous, I have no other apology than this—I am weary of it. At this moment there is scarcely a line standing as it was originally written: I have altered and added, and withdrawn so much, and so frequently from the web, that I have learnt to distrust my own opinion of the whole: I have learnt to doubt of passages on which I should pronounce confidently and firmly, at the first reading, if another had written them. By the opinions of others I shall not be benefited until it is before the world—for I have written it in secrecy, and it shall be published in secrecy. I have written it on my own responsibility and it shall go before my countrymen unaided by criticism or friendship. If it has merit they will acknowledge it—if not at this time, they will at some future hour when it shall have become the fashion for Americans to respect themselves. If it is unworthy of remembrance—let it perish!—and perhaps one day or other I may be among the first to acknowledge the justice of its fate. All I ask is this: read it in charity and remember, I have not attempted to write a *history*, but a *poem*.

THE AUTHOR.

INTRODUCTION.

'Twas night and the breath of the tempest was near,
And her plumes were unfolded abroad o'er the sky;
The lightnings were held in their struggling career,
And the song of the waters went patiently by:

A heaviness was in the air,
As if some form were hovering there,
With languid wing and floating hair:
Some cloudy one, whose sluggish flight
Was stooping to a dreary home:
And paused to intercept the light
That, bursting from the vault of night
Broke o'er clouds in showery foam;
All was as still in heaven and earth
As hours that watch the earthquake's birth;
When lo! a sudden trumpet's blast
Burst loudly on the ear!—and past:
Then came the roll of drums! and high
The cannon's voice and bugle cry:
And then—amid the clouds was heard
A thrilling echo to the song:
And o'er the clouds there shrieked some bird
That went on viewless wing along!

Then a minstrel was seen, and a vision came forth
Like a cold troubled light o'er the clouds or the north,

And the look of the minstrel was lifted and high:
And the lights of the storm and the lights of the sky,
While his robe was abroad on the breeze that went by,
Were flashing and wild in the dark of his eye:
A harp was before him—his hand in the air,
Yet it paused ere it fell on his echoing lyre,
And trembled and dwelt, as uplifted in prayer—
Niagara roll'd!—and the battle was there!
The pealing of thunder, and rushing of fire!
And all that the bosom of song can inspire!
The future in pomp was assembled before him—
He felt as the pinions of prophecy bore him;
And yet—for the dreams of his morning had flown.
His heart was oppressed with a terrour unknown.

The chill of the night on his spirit was shed,
Like the damps that abide on the brow of the dead:
But more than the murmurs of night were around,
When he stooped o'er his harp and awakened a sound;
For voices were heard in the air!
Like the stirring that comes from the tenanted ground,
When revelry wanders there!

Yet thrice he smote the palsied strings,
And thrice he heard the rush of wings,
And feeble murmurings rose!
As if some startled spirit fled—
Some soldier's guard!—where he had bled—
Disturbed in her repose:

As if some warriour raised his head,
And listened from his bloody bed,
To requiems o'er his foes!

The minstrel left the field of blood
And stood above the mighty flood;
And listened to its stormy voice;
And heard it on the winds rejoice;
And there—he would have sung—but there
The awe he felt was in the air.

Then he stood on a cliff when the morning unrolled
Her banners of crimson, and purple, and gold,
Her plumage, and robe with its changeable fold,
And felt as he saw all these splendours outspread,
As if he had gone where some mighty-one slumbers
With the ruins of song, and the relics of numbers;
Who woke as he heard the unhallowed tread!

Yet—yet 'twas an impulse may never be quenched:
The fountains that burst where the light hath its source—
Or cherubim wings, may be stayed in their course,
When they lighten along where the storm is entrenched;
Her spear from the Angel of night may be wrenched;
Or the plumage of Peace in the battle be drenched,—
When it bends o'er the strife, like the bow of the sky,
Or the light that is seen in a martyr'd-one's eye;—

Before you may still the tumultuous voice
Of a heart that is heaving with song;
Before ye may silence the lyres that rejoice,
Where the wind from the water comes sweeping along;
And the chorus of mountain and cavern is strong.

The minstrel smote his harp once more;
And loudly then, there went this strain
Unsteadily, from shore to shore,
And died along the distant main.

My country! my home! sunny land of my fathers!
Where empires unknown in bright solitudes lie;
Where Nature, august in serenity, gathers
The wonders of mountain, and ocean, and sky:
Where the blue dome of heaven scarce bounds her dominion;
Where Man is as free as the creatures of air;
As thine Eagle—of fleet, uncontroulable pinion;
The gallant gray Bird of the Winds! that is there.

That Eagle, whose charter, each morning renews,
As her god thro' unquenchable light she pursues,
And tosses her plumes to the trumpet acclaim:—
To the rushing of wings, and the screaming of praise,
That her starry-eyed nurslings in extacy raise,
As they mount with their bosoms all bare in the blaze
Of their idol, whose temple is contained with flame!

My country! my home! in whose hallowed retreats,
An horizon of blue with a blue water meets,
Till the whole like one ocean appears!

Till the eye that dwells long on the faint, distant verge,
Bewildered to see the fresh islets emerge,
Like evergreen grottoes redeemed from the surge,
Overflows—in the worship of tears:

Where the sun travels low in his chariot of light;
And the stars and the hills are together at night:

Where the lustre that Day at his parting hath shed,
In one blush o'er the land and the water is spread;
And swims like a wreath on each mountain's proud head;
And dwells on the night
Of each cliff's stormy height—
Whose foliage hangs loosely and wildly in air,
Like a meteor-diadem dropped in the flight
Of those who are forth in the storm and the fight,
O'er the plumage of ravens that warriour-helms wear.

There the Thunderers stand! in their fortress of shade
Like a guard that some god in his might hath arrayed:

Where the foam-mantled tides, as they rush from each pole,
Whose warrings have shaken the thrones of the deep,
Embrace in one lasting and measureless roll,
And sink, with the lulling of tempests to sleep:
Where Dominion is stayed by a cliff-guarded shore;
Where Empire looks out from her heights o'er the sea:
Where Peace is at home—and the thunders that roar,
Are not the dread voices that nations deplore,
But the bounding of water that's free!

But the cataract-hymn of an unfettered tide,
Where the battle hath pealed; but no Despots abide;
Where all that moves in storm along:
The earthquake's voice: the torrent's song:
The uproar of the skies, when Night
Leads forth her champions to the fight:
The elemental chant; and roll
Of thunders crowding to the pole:
Or, when the heaven is cloudless, bright;
And hearts are swelling with delight;
And eyes are lifted cheerfully—
They o'er that blue and boundless sky,
Like some archangel's trump on high,
Break suddenly and fearfully!
The Ocean when it rolls aloud:
The Tempest bursting from her cloud
In one uninterrupted peal,
When Darkness sits amid the sky;
And shadowy forms go trooping by;
And everlasting mountains reel:
All—all of this is Freedom's song,
And all that winds and waves prolong,
Are anthems rolled to Liberty!
Land of the mountain and the wood;
The wonders of their giant race;
Creation's barrier! Thou hast stood
Upon thy lofty dwelling place,
Unshaken by contending mains
That thundered in their rocky chains:

Unyielding to the wars that Tempests wage,
When all the elements in wrath engage:
And earthquakes—oceans—in their rage
Have toiled at thine eternal base.

Home of the waters! where their strength
Rolls in immeasureable length:
Or tumbling from their cloudy thrones
As thundering from a battlement,
With martial hymning, like the tones
Of battle-shout, by warriours sent—
Go rioting in foam and spray,
With rainbow-streamers o'er their way,
Beneath the precipice they've rent;
Exulting—as they burst their cloud—
As high—as dazzling—and as loud—
As sheets of light, in their descent
Thro' midnight's parting firmament!

Where such the measure of the sky,
That storms may pass unheeded by;
And such the pillar'd strength of earth,
So strong its everlasting chain,
That when convulsion finds a birth,
That birth is ever found in vain:
The tumult in its weakness dies,
Unheeded by the earth or skies.

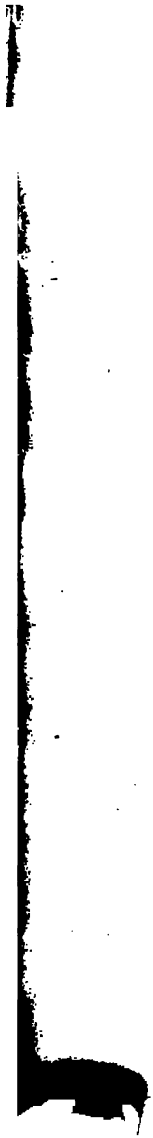
Land of the hero, the patriot, and sage!
Of warriours, whose deeds have unfettered the wave!
Whose standard looks forth where the whirlwinds engage,
And battles aloft—in the realms of the brave!

Whose genius came forth from the home of the flood,
And strove with the pirate's red banner on high,
Till the foam of the ocean was tinged with his blood,
Filled the air with her rainbows!—and fearlessly stood,
And loosened her eaglets abroad o'er the sky!

Of men, who have fought with the high Briton too,
As he sat on his throne in his empire of blue,
Till the scarlet-crossed banner that majesty bent
Had faded and fled from its home in the sky;
Till its terrours went off, as its splendours were rent,
Like meteors that over the firmament fly,
And threw, as they passed o'er the free-rolling tide,
A deep ruddy tint—'twas the last blush of pride.

Land of white bosoms, and blue laughing eyes!
Like miniature pictures of transparent skies,
Where young thoughts like the blessed are seen;
May those eyes brighten quick at the tale that I tell!
And O, if it wake but one white bosom's swell;
One heart where dear Feeling hath been:
One pulse that has throbbed in the still of the night,
In the dream of its soldier afar in the fight,
I'm repaid for it over and over:
And Columbia may wake when she hears the loud strain,
And stoop o'er the graves of her children again,
And weep o'er the garlands they wove her:

And many a bard of my country who slumbers,
Neglected—forgotten—oppressed—or unknown—
May arise in his strength, in the grandeur of numbers,
Sublime on the height of a star-lighted throne—
And chant to the skies! and assert his high claim
With those who are forth for the chaplet of Fame.



BATTLE OF NIAGARA.

CANTO I.

THERE'S a fierce gray Bird, with a bending beak,
With a glittering eye and a piercing shriek,
That nurses her brood where the cliff-flowers blow
On the precipice top—in perpetual snow—
Where the fountains are mute or in secrecy flow:
A BIRD that is first to worship the sun,
When he gallops in light—till the cloud-tides run
In billows of fire as his course is done:
Above where the torrent is forth in its might—
Above where the fountain is gushing in light—
Above where the silvery flashing is seen
Of streamlets that bend o'er the rich mossy green,
Emblazed with the tint of the young morning's eye—
Like ribbons of flame—or the bow of the sky:
Above that dark torrent—above that bright stream,
Her voice may be heard with its clear wild scream,
As she chants to her God and unfolds in his beam;
While her young are all laid in his rich red blaze,
And their winglets are fledged in his hottest rays;

Proud Bird of the Cliff! where the barren yew springs
Where the sunshine stays, and the wind-harp sings;
And the heralds of battle are pluming their wings:
That Bird is abroad over hill-top and flood—
Over valley and rock, over mountain and wood—
Sublimely she sails with her storm-cleaving brood!

In perilous haste, o'er a steep mountain's side,
A troop of tall horsemen are seen to ride:
Careering they come like a band of young knights
That the trumpet of morn to the tilting invites;
With high nodding plumes, and with sun-shiny vests:
With wide tossing manes and with mail-covered breasts
With arching of necks, and the plunge and the pride
Of their high mettled steeds, as they galloping ride
In glitter and pomp:—with their housings of gold—
With their scarlet and blue, as their squadrons unfold
Flashing changeable light, like a banner unrolled.
Now they burst on the eye in their martial array!
And now they have gone!—like a vision of day:
In a streaming of splendor they came—but they wheeled
And instantly all the bright show was concealed!
As if 'twere a tournament held in the sky
Betrayed by some light passing suddenly by:
Some band by the flashing of torches revealed,
As it fell o'er the boss of an uplifted shield,
Or plumage and blades in the darkness concealed.
They came like a cloud that is passing the light,
That brightens and blazes—and fades from the sight:
They came like a dream—and as swiftly they fled
As the shadows that pass o'er the sun's dying red—

And one has returned! 'twas the first of the band;
On the top of the cliff he has taken his stand,
And the tread of his barb as he leans in his strength,
And loosens his mane in the flow of its length,
Declares he is reined by a masterly hand!
While he rears o'er the rich-rolling clouds of that height,
Like a pageant upraised by the wonders of light:
A warriour of flame!—on a courser of night!
See, his helm feathers glance in the clear setting sun,
While his sabre is forth, o'er the cliff he has won,
With a waving of strength and an air of command!

He is gone—and the brown, where the sunset reposes
Grows warm as the bloom on the bosom of roses;
The herbage is crimson'd and sprinkled with light,
And purple and yellow are busy and bright.
On the precipice-crown, and the sceptre of green
That the forest-tree heaves, a red lustre is seen,
In a wreathing of light: 'tis a garland that they,
Whose blossoms are plucked at the closing of day,
Have dropp'd from their laps in their rioting play:
The summer leaf reddens and deepens its dies;
Its scarlet and green all unite, as it lies,
In the breath of the vapour, and hue of the skies.
The young gushing fount ripples tenderly red;
And a blush like the sighing of blossoms is shed
O'er the green shiny moss that around it is spread.
A glow like enchantment is seen o'er the lake,
Like the flush of the sky, when the day heralds wake,
And o'er its deep blue all their soft plumage shake:

Now the warmth of the heaven is fading away:
Young Evening comes up in pursuit of the Day:
The richness and mist of the tints that were there
Are melting away like the bow of the air:
The blue bosom'd water heaves darker and bluer:
The cliffs and the trees are seen bolder and truer:
The landscape has less of enchantment and light;
But it lies the more steady and firm in the sight:
The lustre crown'd peaks, while they dazzled the eye
Seemed loosen'd and passing away in the sky:
And the far distant hills in their tremulous blue,
Like the violet that's melting away in its dew,
But baffled the eye, as it dwelt on their hue.
The light of the hill, and the wave, and the sky
Grow fainter, and fainter:—the wonders all die.

The visions have gone! they have vanished away,
Unobserved in their change, like the bliss of a day.
The rainbows of heaven were bent in our sight:
And fountains were gushing like wine in its light:
And seraphs were wheeling around in their flight—
A moment—and all was enveloped in night!
'Tis thus with the dreams of the high-heaving heart,
They come but to blaze—and they blaze to depart:
Their gossamer wings are to thin to abide
The chilling of sorrow, or burning of pride.
They come but to brush o'er its young gallant swell,
Like bright birds over ocean;—but never to dwell.

Observ'd ye the cloud on that mountain's dim green?
So heavily hanging? as if it had been

The tent of the Thunderer—the chariot of one
Who dare not appear in the blaze of the sun?
'Tis descending to earth! and some horsemen are now,
In a line of dark mist, coming down from its brow.
'Tis a helmeted band! from the hills they descend
Like the monarchs of storm, when the forest trees bend.
No scimitars swing as they gallop along:
No clattering roof falls sudden and strong:
No trumpet is filled, and no bugle is blown:
No banners abroad on the wind are thrown:
No shoutings are heard—and no cheerings are given:
No wavings of red flowing plumage to heaven:
No flashing of blades, and no loosening of reins:
No neighing of steeds, and no tossing of manes:
No furniture trailing, or warriour helms bowing—
Or crimson and gold-spotted drapery flowing.
But they speed like coursers whose hoofs are shod,
With a silent shoe from the loosen'd sod:
Like the steeds that career, o'er the billowy surf,
Or stretch like the winds o'er the untrodden turf,
Where the willow and yew in their darkness are weeping,
And young, gallant hearts in their sepulchres sleeping:
Like the squadrons that on the pale light of the moon,—
While the Nights muffled horn plays a low windy tune,
Are seen to come down from the height of the skies,
By the warriour, that on the red battle-field lies,
And wave their cloud helmets and charge o'er the field,
And career o'er the tracks where the living had wheel'd;

When the dying half raise themselves up in a trance,
And gaze on the show as their thin banners glance,
And wonder to see the dread battle renewed,
On the turf where themselves and their comrades had
stood.
Like these shadows, in swiftness and darkness they ride
O'er the thunder-reft mount—on its ruggedest side:
From the precipice top they circle and leap,
Like the warriours of air, that are seen in our sleep:
Like the foemen that pass by the bleeding one's eyes,
With gestures more wild and more fierce till he dies:
And away they have gone with a motionless speed,
Like Demons abroad on some dreadful deed.
The last one hath gone: they have all disappear'd;
Their dull-echoed trampings no longer are heard:
For still, tho' they passed like no steeds of the earth,
The fall of their tread gave some hollow-sounds birth;
Your heart would lie still till it numbered the last;
And your breath would be held till the rear horseman
past:
So swiftly—so mutely—so darkly they went,
Like the spectres of air to the sorcerer sent,
That ye *felt* their approach, and might guess their intent.
Your hero's stern-bosom will oftentimes quake,
Your gallant young warriour-plume oftentimes shake
Before the cool marching that comes in the night—
Passing by like a cloud in the dim troubled light—
Appalling the heart with a nameless affright.—
When *that* would swell strongly, and *this* would appear,
If the sound of one trumpet saluted the ear;

Like some scarlet-wing'd bird, that is nurs'd in the day,
When she shakes her red plumage in wrath o'er her prey.

For be they the horsemen of earth or of heaven:
No blast that the trumpet of Slaughter hath given;
No roll of the drum—and no cry of the fife;
No neighing of steeds in the bloodiest strife—
Is half so appalling to full swelling hearts,
As the still, pulseless-tramp of a band that departs,
With echoeless armour—with motionless plume:
With ensigns all furled—in the trappings of gloom—
Parading like those who came up from the tomb,
In silence and darkness—determined and slow,
And dreadfully calm—as the murderers brow,
When his dagger is forth!—and ye see not the blow,
Till the gleam of the blade shows your heart in its flow.

O, say what ye will!—the dull sound that awakes,
When the night breeze is down, and the chill spirit aches
With its measureless thought, is more dreadful by far
Than the burst of the trump as it peals for the war.
It is the cold summons that comes from the ground,
When a sepulchre answers your light youthful bound,
And loud joyous laugh, with its chill fearful sound,
Compar'd to the challenge that leaps on the ear,
When the banners of death in their splendours appear,
And the free golden bugle sings freshly and clear!
The low, sullen moans that so feebly awake,

At midnight—when one is alone—on some lake,
Compar'd to the Thunderer's voice, when it rolls
From the bosom of space, to the uttermost poles!
Like something that stirs in the weight of a shroud;
The talking of those who go by in a cloud;
To the cannon's full voice when it wanders aloud!
'Tis the light that is seen to burst under the wave—
The pale, fitful omen, that plays o'er a grave,
To the rushing of fire where the turf is all red,
And farewells are discharg'd o'er a young soldier's bed!
To the lightnings that blaze o'er the mariner's way,
When the storm is in pomp, and the ocean in spray!

Dark and chill is the sky; and the clouds gather round;
There's nought to be seen, yet there comes a low sound;
As if something were near, that would pass unobserv'd,
O, if 'tis that band, may their right-arms be nerved!
Hark!—a challenge is given!—a rash charger neighs!
And a trumpet is blown! and lo, there's a blaze!
And a clashing of sabres is heard—and a shout,
Like a hurrying order, goes passing about!
And unfurling banners are toss'd to the sky,
As struggling to float on the wind passing by—
And unharness'd war-steeds are crowding together;
The horseman's thick plume—and the foot soldier's feather—
The battle is up and the thunder is pealing;
And squadrons of horsemen are coursing and wheeling;
And line after line in their light are revealing!

One troop of high helms thro' the midst urge their way,
Unbroken and stern, like a ship thro' the spray:
Their pistols speak quick—and their blades are all bare,
And the sparkles of steely encounter are there.

Away they still speed!—with one impulse they bound;
With one impulse alike, as their foes gather round.
Undismayed—undisturbed—and above all the rest,
One rides o'er the strife, like a plume o'er its crest;
And holds on his way thro' the scimetars there,
All plunging in light!—while the slumbering air
Shakes wide with the rolling artillery-peal:
That tall plume is first, and its followers deal
Around, and around their desperate blows,
Like the army of shadows above, when it goes
With the smiting of shields and the clapping of wings;
When the red-crests shake—and the storm-pipe sings:
When the cloud-flag unfurls—and the death-bugles sound—
When the monarchs of space on their dark chargers bound—
And the shock of their cavalry comes in the night,
With furniture flashing! and weapons of light!
So travelled this band in its pomp and its might.

Away they have gone!—and their path is all red,
Hedged in by two lines of the dying and dead;
By bosoms that burst unrevenged in the strife—
By swords that yet shake in the passing of life—
For so swift had that pageant of darkness sped—
So like a trooping of cloud mounted dead—

That the flashing reply, of the foe that was cleft,
But fell on the shadows those troopers had left.

And would ye know why woke that desperate fray?
Why battle moved in night and shunned the day?
And who the leader of that sullen band,
Whose march seemed destiny?—whose stern command
Went thrilling to the heart,—while not a word
He uttered in his march—and nought was heard,
But the deep, dreadful sound, of hearts that burst,
Of arms that smote in death, and lips that curs'd?
Who gave no cheering to his troops!—as they
Wheeled—charged—and smote—and gallopp'd in array!
But shook his naked falchion in his might,
And scattered o'er the path its meteor light?
The only guide they wished for in the fight!
Then, like the bolt of heaven, it flash'd and fell!
On blades and helms, that shatter'd in their knell.
How firm and high he sat!—all bone—all strength—
His charger stretching at his utmost length!

'Tis lighter now: that band is seen again,
Passing at length before a tented plain:
The moon is up, and brightening o'er their road;
Their steeds come bravely round beneath their load,
And slacken to a trot—and snorting loudly,
Strain their dark necks, with far manes floating proudly:
Thickening their tramps approach—they near the blaze
Of Freedom's camp, where many a votary prays.
The leader halts—the steady lights show well
His stately outline and his charger's swell.

How like a shade the horse and rider seem!
Like the dark trooper of a troubled dream.
His sabre is abroad—they gather round—
Back!—back,—it waves!—and hark! the bugles sound:
Swiftly he wheels!—his arm is stretched again—
Some gather round, and some behind remain.
Forth, and all free! a chosen escort spring;
Unsheath their hangers, while their scabbards ring:
Leap to their places, and at speed depart,
While the rough trumpets on the night-winds start:
Away they stretch at length! as when they've met
In chase upon the mountain-tops, while yet
The morning gems are thick, and all the turf is wet.

That troop have staid their march—and one's ahead;
His fire-eyed charger halts with angry tread;
His black limbs bathed in foam—his reaching mane,
Rising and sinking, as he feels the reign:
Now rings the harness!—from the saddle bounds
The red-plumed chief—erect, and lightly sounds
A free-tuned bugle to the distant hills;
Singing and pealing clear, like horn that Echo fills:
And lo! an answer comes—that faintly dies
In such calm melody along the skies,
As if it were a challenge lightly given,
From golden trumpets on a summer even!
Now springing merrily upon the ear,
As if that angel trumpeter were near:

Like songs ye hear at evening o'er the main—
Like bells upon the wind—that come and go again.

'Halt here!' the chieftain said—'halt here awhile:'
His cheek burned deeper—and a soldier smile
Played sternly o'er his features, as he laid
His martial hand upon his rattling blade,
And gathered up his cloak, and strode amid the shade.

BATTLE OF NIAGARA.

CANTO II.

HERE sleeps ONTARIO. Dark blue water hail!
Unawed by conquering prow, or pirate sail,
Still heaving in thy freedom—still unchained!
Still swelling to the skies—still unprofaned!
The heaven's blue counterpart: the murmuring home,
Of spirits shipwrecked on the ocean's foam:
Reflector of the arch that's o'er thee bent:
Thou watery sky! thou liquid firmament!
Mirror of garland-weaving Solitude—
The wild festoon—the cliff—and hanging wood—
The soaring eagle, and the wing of light—
The sunny plumage—and the starry flight
Of dazzling myriads, in a cloudless night.

Peace to thy bosom, dark Ontario!
Forever thus, may thy free waters flow,
In their rude loveliness! Thy lonely shore
Forever echo to the sullen roar

Of thine own deep! Thy cliffs forever ring
With calling wild men, in their journeying—
The savage chant—the panther's smothered cry—
That from her airy height, goes thrilling by!
Be ever thus—as now—magnificent—
In savage nature's pomp—unbowed—unbent,
And thou wilt ever be omnipotent!

Be ever thus Ontario!—and be free:
The home of wild men, and of Liberty.—
But let thy woods be bowed—their sceptres shorn:
Thy blooming streamers from thy ramparts torn;
Thy fountains hushed—and their luxuriant green
Of oozy moss, that o'er thy haunts are seen,
Be trampled on and opened to the sun—
And all their rich exuberance is done:
Let but the white man's summons once be heard,
And gone, forever, is thy guardian Bird:
Be once thy torrents stilled—the shiny moss,
Thy grotto-hangings, that the dews emboss;
Thy glittering halls laid open to the light—
Thy mysteries revealed to the unholy sight:
Thy secret places to the sun betrayed;
And, in thy temples, men of blood arrayed;
The curtain of thy sanctuary rent—
Thy dwellings opened to the firmament:
Thy solitude disturbed—thine altars stained:
Thy heights polluted, and thy depths profaned
With Indian blood, and thy dark offspring chained:

Thy battlements of rocks, and cliffs, and clouds—
Stripped of their garland flags, and hung with shrouds,
And bright with glittering spires: thine altars down—
Then—what art thou? and where thy thrones? and crown?
Thy sceptres? and thy hosts?—forever gone!
And thou—a savage in the world!—alone:
A naked monarch—sullen stern, and rude,
Amid a robed and plumed multitude:
Sublime and motionless—but impotent—
Stripped of his arrows, and with bow unbent.
Who feels that terrour of the Indian then,
Such as he felt in night and darkness, when
That Indian walked alone, the conquerer of men?

True, he may walk with his own fearless tread;
With out-stretched arm, and high uplifted head,
Of one familiar with the pathless wood,
The caverned chace, the haunts of solitude—
The midnight storm—the thunder-clap—and sleep
On jutting cliff—above a tumbling deep:
But where will be that reverential dread,
That hung upon the wild man, in his tread
Within his own dominions?—it is gone!—
And he stands there—undreaded and alone.

Such are thy wild men, dark Ontario!
Each is a monarch where thy waters flow:
But rend him from his home and place him where
The heaven's bright blue is hidden—and the air

Breathes thick with pestilence—and there he dies,
With few to fear and none to sympathise;

O save thy children blue Ontario!—
Who, in the wilderness, can calmly go
To do their worship in a lonely place,
By altars reeking with the she-wolf's trace:
And gaze intrepidly upon the skies,
While the red lightning in its anger flies—
When white men, in their terrour, close their eyes:
For man is there sublime—he is a god!
Great Nature's master-piece! like him who trod
The banks of paradise, and stood alone,
The wonder of the skies—erect upon his throne.

Not like the airy god of moulded light,
Just stepping from his chariot on the sight;
Poising his beauties on a rolling cloud,
With arm unstretched and bow-string twanging loud:
And arrows singing as they pierce the air,
With tinkling sandals and with golden hair;
As if he paused upon his bounding way,
And loosened his fierce arrows—but in play:
But like that angry god, in blazing light
Bursting from space! and standing in his might:
Revealed in his omnipotent array
Apollo of the skies! and Deity of Day!
In godlike wrath! piercing his myriad-foe
With quenchless shafts, that lighten as they go:

Not like that god, when up in air he springs,
With brightening mantle, and with sunny wings,
When heavenly musick murmurs from his strings—
A buoyant vision—an embodied dream
Of dainty Poesy—and boyishly supreme.

Not the thin spirit waked by young Desire,
Gazing o'er heaven, till her thoughts take fire:
Panting and breathless in her heart's wild trance—
Bright, shapeless forms—the godlings of Romance.
Not that Apollo—not resembling him,
Of silver brow, and woman's nerveless limb:
But man!—all man!—the monarch of the wild!
Not the faint spirit—that corrupting smil'd
On soft voluptuous Greece—but Nature's child,
Arrested in the chase! with piercing eye
Fix'd in its airy light'ning on the sky,
Where some red Bird is languid, eddying, drooping,
Pierced by his arrows in her swiftest stooping.
Thus springing to the skies!—a boy will stand
With arms uplifted, and unconscious hand
Tracing its arrow in its loftiest flight—
And watch it kindling as it cleaves the light,
Of worlds unseen but by the Indian sight;
His robe and hair upon the wind at length,
A creature of the hills!—all grace and strength;
All muscle and all flame—his eager eye
Fixed on one spot as if he could descry
His bleeding victim nestling in the sky.
Not that Apollo!—not the heavenly one,
Voluptuous spirit of a setting sun,—

But this—the offspring of young Solitude,
Child of the holy spot, where none intrude
But genii of the torrent—cliff, and wood—
Nursling of cloud and storm—the desert's fiery brood.

Great Nature's man!—and not a thing all light:
Etherial vision of distempered sight;
But mingled clouds and sunshine—flame and light.
With arrow not like his of sport—that go
In light of musick from a silver bow:
But barbed with flint—with feather—reeking red,
The heart-blood that some famished wolf hath shed!

Ontario of the woods! may no broad sail
Ever unfold upon thy mountain gale!
Thy waters were thus spread—so fresh and blue
But for thy white fowl and the light canoe.
Should once the smooth dark lustre of thy breast
With mightier burthens, ever be oppressed—
Farewell to thee! and all thy loveliness!
Commerce will rear her arks—and Nature's dress
Be scattered to the winds: thy shores will bloom,
Like dying flow'rets sprinkled o'er a tomb;
The feverish, fleeting lustre of the flowers
Burnt into life in Art's unnatural bowers;
Not the green—graceful—wild luxuriance
Of Nature's garlands, in their negligence:
The clambering jassimine, and flushing rose
That in the wilderness their hearts disclose;

The dewy violet, and the bud of gold,
Where drooping lilies on the wave unfold;
Where nameless flowers hang fainting on the air,
As if they breathed their lovely spirits there;
Where heaven itself is bluer, and the light
Is but a coloured fragrance—floating—bright;
Where the sharp note—and whistling song is heard,
Of many a golden beak, and sunny sparkling bird:

There the tame honeysuckle will arise;
The gaudy hot-house plant will spread its dyes,
In flaunting boldness to the sunny skies:
And sickly buds, as soon as blown, will shed
Their fainting leaves o'er their untimely bed;
Unnatural violets in the blaze appear—
With hearts unwet by youthful Flora's tear:
And the loose poppy with its sleepy death,
And flashy leaf: the warm and torpid breath
Of lazy garlands, over crawling vines;
The tawdry wreath that Fashion intertwines
To deck her languid brow: the streamy gold,
And purple flushing of the tulip's fold;
And velvet buds, of crimson, and of blue,
Unchangeable and lifeless, as the hue
Of Fashion's gaudy wreaths, that ne'er were wet with dew.

Such flowers as travellers would not stoop to bless,
Tho' seen by fountains in the wilderness:

Such heartless flowers, as Love would disavow;
And blooming Flora, if upon her brow
Their leaves had once been dropped, would feel as tho'
Pollution's lips were pressed upon its snow:
Not the white blossom, that beneath its green
And glossy shelter, like a star is seen;
Shrinking and closing from the beam of day—
A virgin flow'ret for the twilight ray:
Not the blue hare-bell swelling o'er the ground,
And thinly echoing to the fairy bound
Of tripping feet, within its silky round:
Not the wild snow leaf trembling to the moon,
But the tame sun-flower basking in the noon.

Where now red Summer, in her sporting, weaves
Her brightest blossoms with her greenest leaves:
Where the wild grape hangs dropping in the shade
O'er unfledged minstrels, that beneath are laid:
Where all is fragrant, breathing negligence;
And Nature's budding child, sweet Innocence;
Where now her treasures, and her mysteries—
Like shrouded diamonds—or like sleeping eyes,
Are only seen by those, who kneel and take
Their first bright beaming, when they first awake:
Where now, fresh streamlets answer to the hues
Of passing seraph wings, that drip with dews
From their fresh plunging in the rainbow-bath,
That tempting gushed before their radiant path:
Where fountains sing, and sparkle to the skies
In all their sweetest desert melodies;

The prisoned water will be made to play
In one eternal glitter to the day:
Unnatural freshness—arbours will be seen—
And tortured festoons of fantastick green:
The heavy grotto—and the loaded bower:
The green and tepid pond: the pale wall-flower
The tasteless mingling of the savage pine,
With the bright tendrils of the garden vine:
The stooping willow, with its braided light,
And feathery tresses, changeable and bright—
The airy mountain ash—the elm—and oak
Rising triumphant from the Thunderer's stroke;—
In all their rich exuberance, shooting out
Their restless sceptres, to the winds about,
The lordly monarchs of the vigorous wood!
Placed by the towering—upstart-poplar brood:—
And all the foppery of silly Taste,
That grieves to see wild Nature so unchaste,
That—in her modesty—would barely hint
'That such and such, a shade, and such a tint
'Might mingle better if a little care—
'A little grouping here—and contrast there,
'Were just to—but no matter'—they all know
Better than Nature, how her flowers should blow;
How her sweet birds should sing, and fountains flow—
And where her trees should stand—her cliffs should rise,
In scattered pointings to the glorious skies.
Leave such cold bosoms, Nature, to their fate;
And be thou grand—luxuriant—desolate—

As it best pleaseth thee. These wretched fools
Would have Creation work by lines and rules.
Their's is the destiny—be theirs the curse,
In their improvements still—to mount from bad to worse.

Be ever dark Ontario! and be wild
In thine own nakedness—young nature's child!
Still hang her festoons o'er thy glittering caves:
Still far from thee the pageantry of slaves!
The dull cold blooming of the lifeless wreaths,
Plucked from the gardens where Oppression breathes:
The misty poison of the sultry flowers,
That shed their sleep in artificial bowers:
May Architecture never rear her spires
Or swell her domes to thy warm sunset fires;
Where now, o'er verdant pyramids and pines,
And dark green crowns, the crimson lustre shines!
Enough has now been done—thou art but free:
Art *but* a refuge now for Liberty:
E'en now the wakening thunder sometimes roars
Above thy prostrate oaks—the guardians of thy shores.

Roll not thy waves in light, Ontario!
Forever darkly may thy waters flow!—
Through thy tall shores and blooming solitudes,
Sacred to loneliness—and caves—and woods:—
Roll not thy waves in light—or thou wilt see
Their bosoms heave no longer darkly free:

But whitening into foam beneath their load,
While Commerce ploughs upon her flashing road;
And thou mayest stand, and hearken to the cry
Of thy young genii mounting to the sky:
And feel the fanning of the last free wing
That's shaken o'er thy brow, as it goes wandering.

O be thou ever free, Ontario!
Forever thus may thy free waters flow;
Or thou mayest lie and listen to the roar
Of conquering thunders echoing from thy shore;
Thy ramparts and thy cliffs: thy citadels,
Where now Sublimity, with Freedom, dwells,
Will see thy conquerers on thy mountains rise,
With glittering banners rustling in the skies,
And see their streamers flash, and hear the song
Of victory o'er thee, go pealingly along.

Hail sleepless monarch! Dark Ontario!
Thou, of the woods, and of the Indian bow,
I see thy glories in their dark blue flow!
A lake of wonders!—where the stars appear
In thy fair deep so glorious and so clear
In their confusion! All thy dim shores lie
In moonlight's sleepy—soft tranquillity.
The air is cool, but motionless, about
Is something of enchantment, and of doubt:
As in the fleeting scenery of a dream
When landscapes come—and vanish!—like the beam

That blue, voluptuous eyes emit in tears,
That trembles—brightens—fades, and disappears!
Something mysterious—holy—like the air
Of caverns, when some spirit has been there;
While yet the breathing incense that was shed,
Is faint and floating round, like sighings o'er the dead.

No sound is on the ear: no boatman's oar
Drops its dull signal to the watchful shore:
But all is listening, as it were, to hear
Some seraph harper stooping from her sphere,
And calling on the desert to express,
Its sense of Silence in her loveliness.
What holy dreaming comes in nights like these!
When, like yon wave—unruffled by a breeze,
The mirrors of the memory all are spread,
And fanning pinions sail around your head:
When all that man may love—alive or dead,
Come murmuring sweet, unutterable things,
And nestle on his heart with their young wings.
And all perchance may come, that he may fear,
And mutter doubtful curses in his ear;
Hang on his loaded heart, and fill his brain
With indistinct forbodings, wild and vain;
Who has not felt the unexpected tear?
Who has not shaken with an awful fear,
When, in the wilderness—alone—he trod—
Where, since there walked the Everlasting God—

No living foot hath been? where boundless woods—
Where sanctuaries—waters—solitudes—
In open stillness—hallowed grandeur spread,
As if in invitation to the dead.

The moon goes lightly o'er her thronging way,
And shadowy things are brightening into day;
And cliff, and shrub, and bank, and tree, and stone,
Now move upon the eye—and now are gone!
A dazzling tapestry is hung around:
A gorgeous carpeting bestrews the ground:
The willows glitter in the passing beam,
And shake their tangling lustres o'er the stream:
And all the full, rich foilage of the shore,
Seems with a quick enchantment frosted o'er;
And dances at the faintest breath of night,
And trembles like a plume of spangles in the light.

Far o'er the slumbering wave, amid the shade,
Millions of dancing lights are thick array'd:
And interposing forms are seen to go,
With ceaseless step, unwearied, firm and slow—
In measured walking, like a cavalcade—
As if a band were marshalled for parade—
Before a line of fire, that redly throws
A glimmering richness where that billow flows;
And some yet feebler lights are o'er the turf,
Like sea-foam, brightening faintly o'er the surf.

There, Pestilence hath breathed! within each tent
The midnight bow, with quenchless shaft—is bent;
And many a youthful hero wastes away,
In that—the worst of deaths—the death of slow decay.

This dark, cool wave is bluer than the deep,
Where sailors—children of the tempest! sleep;
And dropped with lights as pure—as still as those—
The wide-drawn hangings of the skies disclose,
Far lovelier than the dim and broken ray,
That Ocean's flashing surges send astray:
And when the foam comes loosely o'er its breast,
The sea maid's bosom with its studded vest,
That mightier billows bear, is dark—is dull
To this light silvery spray, so beautiful!
This is the mirror of dim Solitude,
On which unholy things may ne'er intrude;
That frowns and ruffles when the clouds appear,
Refusing to reflect their shapes of fear;
Ontario's deeps are spread to multiply
But sunshine—stars—the moon—and clear blue sky:
The ocean—when at peace—is but the place
Where those who rule the tempest—dwell in space—
Direct the thunder—rock th' established hill—
And stedfast shore;—whose myriads fill
All heaven and earth—and air—are wont to dwell,
And calm themselves upon its mightiest swell.

No pirate barque was ever seen to ride,
With blood red streamer, chacing o'er that tide,

Till late, no bugles o'er those waters sang
With aught but hunstman's orisons, that rang
Their clear—exulting—bold—triumphant strain,
Till all the mountain echoes laughed again!
Till caverns, depths, and hills, would all reply,
And heaven's blue arch ring back the sprightly melody.

Within those depths no shipwrecked sailor lies
Upon his foaming couch; whose dying eyes
Were closed amid the storm—with no one near,
To grasp his hand, or drop a manly tear:
With not one friend—one shipmate left to tell,
As 'tis in strife—how gallantly he fell.
Not one to tell the melancholy tale,
To her, whose heart is on the rising gale.
Within that peaceful sanctuary sleep
No victim wanderers of the mighty deep;
No ocean-wreaths are there—no diadems
Of bloody sea-weed, sprinkled o'er with gems,
That vanish when ye touch them, like the pearl
That glitters on the sea-maid's shining curl;
No wrecks of slaughter:—flags in battle rent
By Victory scattered in the firmament:
Not one of all those trophies of the flood,
When ship encounters ship, and foams along in blood.

August amid this scene, unclouded, stand
The everlasting hills that guard our land:

And rear their rocky helmets, where the sky
Hath pitched their tent upon immensity.
These are our forts! our battlements! our holds!
Our bulwarks! our entrenchments! Here unfolds
The rainbow banner, and its lights are forth
In sudden splendours, like the streaming north:
An outspread Eaglet, o'er each standard stoops,
With unclosed beak, and wing that never droops:
And stars are busy there—and through the night,
A constellation blazes on the sight:—
Eagles! and stars! and rainbows!—all abroad,
Beneath a boundless sky, upon a mountain road!

And Liberty, from whose imperial eye
Unfettered limb, and step of majesty,
Perpetual sunshine wanders on the air,
When undisturbed by man—in wrath is there!
And prostrate armies now, are kneeling round:
They see the rolling clouds! they hear the sound
Of pealing thunders! While her martial form
Lightens tremendous o'er the gathering storm.
They breathe that buoyant mountain atmosphere,
And kindling in their eyes those lights appear,—
Those quenchless lights!—that Despots, Tyrants dread,
When Man comes forth in might, and lifts his head
Sublime in desperation; when they hear
The song of trumpets bursting on their ear!
The shock of armies! and afar behold
Rebellion's crimson standard all unrolled:

When slaves are men—are monarchs—and their tread
Comes like the resurrection of the dead:
Man bursts his fetters! shakes his sheathless sword—
Stands on his grave, and battles with his lord
For sepulture or freedom—eye to eye:—
And swears to live his equal, or to die
In glorious martyrdom to glorious LIBERTY.

Then let the trumpet of the battle sound:
Then let the shuddering challenge peal around:
Till all our ruffled Eaglets start and wake—
And scream aloud—and whet their beaks—and shake,
Their guardian wings, o'er mountain, wood, and lake!
The blast will but disturb the spirit there;
But rouse the she-wolf from her bloody lair:
But wake the fiery-harnessed multitudes;
The dark battalions of untrodden woods;
Whose viewless chiefs shall gird their armour on,
And lighten o'er the fields their valour won:
'Twill waken echoes in that solitude,
Less welcome than the panther's cry for food:
Less earthly—than the voices heard, when Night
Collects her angels on some stormy height,
And airy trumps are blown, and o'er the heaven
Ten thousand fearful challenges are given!

Those star-crowned hills! the gathering will be there
Of heaven's dim hordes, the squadrons of the air!
Erect and high, upon their stormy cars—
In meteor armour—rushing mid the stars,

And rear their rocky helmets, where the sky
Hath pitched their tent upon immensity.
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Of heaven's dim hordes, the squadrons of the air!
Erect and high, upon their stormy cars—
In meteor armour—rushing mid the stars,

The dusky champions of the earth and sky
Will seem encountering in their chivalry.
Yon moon-light tents, so gallantly outspread
By living hands, will then be filled with dead:
Whose home is space: the habitation, too,
Of yon perpetual host, that walk in blue:
That endless multitude! eternal source
Of wonder, and of worship in their course!
O, whither is your march? ye stars! and whence?
Ye blazing myriads of Omnipotence!
Ye suns! who burst from darkness with our earth,
But yet come forth in one continual birth!
Almighty miracles! who fill the air
With musick and with light, as if ye were
A host of living harmonies, that roll
With worlds and worlds—all intellect and soul!
Interpreters of God! who've called to man
From yon eternal vault, since time began:
Ye midnight travellers, who nightly, move
In everlasting pilgrimage above!
Ye blazonry of power! ye heraldry of love!

There's one who stands to see that deep blue fold
Of glories—suns—and systems all unrolled,
In speechless adoration,—with an eye
Of dampened light uplifted to the sky;
Who half forgets the signal that he gave,
And echoing answer o'er the distant wave:
For he is all alone upon that shore—
Alone—at night—what could he think of more?

He speaks not—moves not: his uncovered brow,
If one might see—perchance is gathered now;
His attitude, so fixed, is that of thought—
Something of stern composure; as if wrought
With dangerous purpose to be done with speed,
Some quick-matured—but full-determined deed:
Now—o'er the dark blue waters you may see
His eye go flashing and impatiently:
And now his helm is shaken—and his hand
Is partly raised as if 'twere in command:
The dipping of an oar is heard—a boat so light,
It scarcely touched the wave, is now in sight:
Around the cliff it came, like some keen bird—
That passes by you 'ere her wing is heard:
Like the enchanted skiff that dreamers see
Self-moved in moonlight breeze—light, swift and cheerfully.

An Indian springs on shore: his light canoe
Hath vanished like a spectre from the view:
Something he murmurs in the sullen tone
Of one who is abandoned: all alone—
Left to contend with many; and his eye,
So rooted—deadly, bodes some danger nigh:
Hush! hush—a rustling—and a fearful pause—
A sword is half unsheathed—the Indian draws
His arrow to the head: but why?—no sound—
Of thundering tread, is echoing on the ground:
No footstep comes—no cautious—stealing foe—
The garland-float is heard, and watery-flow—
And nothing else, o'er blue Ontario.

One rapid glance! his soul is all revealed;
Battle is near—his swarthy brow is sealed
With Indian-meaning, and his serpent eye
Is black and glittering with a changeless dye;
The stranger too—as if he scarcely breathed,
Stands stooping—listening—with his blade unsheathed:
Silent as death they are; one glance—a single glance
Was but exchanged—in their deep, pulseless trance—
One glance! it was enough—and each was sure
Of all his fellow would perform—endure.
O—none of that of companionship is here,
The union of the vulgar when in fear:
No talk—no whisper—but the steady eye
Of dangerous-boding—stern tranquillity:
The strong, cool brow—the upright, martial tread
Of planted strength—the boldly lifted head.
That glance! that white man's glance—the Indian feels
What none but Nature's savage man conceals—
The swell of sympathy—of brotherhood
In danger and in death—in solitude.

Now—o'er the waters ye may faintly see
A shadowy something coming silently:
A rushing now is heard—and spreading large
With sail upon the wind—there comes a barge:
And yet, methinks, its lightly lifted prow,
Upon its glossy path, goes wondrous slow:
It comes—as drifting from the guarded strand,
And looks as tho' in peace—unarmed—unmanned:

This has a quiet aspect—but that sail
Is sharply trimmed as if it might prevail,
In ruder nights than this, against a fiercer gale.

A Bird of prey, perhaps—that folds its wing—
And sits upon the wave in slumbering;
That stoops at night—but stay! she goes about—
Is that a signal?—there!—that light throws out?
By heaven, 'tis answered!—answered from the land!
From yonder beetling steep is stretched a hand!
The waters foam—up comes the boat in pride!
Leaving a path of light along the tide;
And ere the soldier can put forth his blade,
He is a prisoner!—Round him are arrayed
A hidden band, that started from their shade:
A band with bayonets levelled at his breast—
The circle narrows—nods each threatening crest:
Contracting slowly, they approach—as they
Still feared a single warriour, when at bay:
'Yield!' cries the foremost loudly,—fiercely—'yield!'
The stranger would reply—but sees concealed
Beneath a stooping oak, his dark ally,
With bended bow—and cool, and patient eye,—
He waves his hand—the arrows point is dropp'd—
The death shaft of a foe upon its flight is stopp'd.
The summons is repeated: 'Yield!' he cries,
With anger flashing from his youthful eyes:
A pause:—a sudden change of attitude betrays
A naked blade to his imperious gaze:

A backward step—'a dagger!—thus revealed:—'
What could he think?—'Stranger!—that point concealed!'
'*Concealed!*' the stranger echoed:—and it came,
With startling emphasis, and kindling flame;
Then—turning silently, he shook his head
In calm disdain, and with his lordly tread
And gathered cloak, he stood—as one who feels
That every spirit round him, prostrate kneels:
He grasps his trusty hilt:—he moves away:
The circle widens:—all who meet, obey
The calm command—firm step—intrepid eye
Of one familiar with such victory.
Amid the working of that mighty spell
He had escaped: but some low murmurs fell,
And each arose in heart: their wandering eyes
Now lowered in silent threat—now sought their prize.
The charm was broken, and their strength returned:
And each reproached his comrade, while he burned
To wipe away, forever, this disgrace,
And meet his foe, once more!—but face to face.
'Tis done: their prayer is granted:—their pursuit
Is short indeed. Again they all are mute.
He stands too proudly—and is found too near,
To leave them their last hope—that he had fled in fear.

Their angry leader is the first to break
The sullen loneliness: the first to wake
Some sound—he cares not what—so it be life:
Something less awful—be it even strife.

'Stranger!' he cries again, 'your arms! your sword!—
'Or'—pausing faintly—'or'—the evening word.
The stranger smiled—advanced his foot,—and said,
While all stood awe-struck at his martial tread,
And something rustled in the neighboring shade:
'Where is your leader?—let him take my blade!'
I am the leader!—
'You! and by what right
'Arrest ye thus a traveller at night?'
They marked his port—his keen, unshifting eye:
His half-raised lip, and stand of majesty:
His calm—serene—and almost taunting tone—
And yet—they knew their prize!—he was alone.
'A *traveller!*—yes—and ere to-morrow's light
He will be hanged for travelling thus at night.'
The stranger's hand fell sudden on his hip,
'Hanged!' he replied, and higher curled his lip,
And lightnings left his eye!—and forth he stood
Like something raised within that solitude
By some unholy rite—upraised in wrath
By some unhallowed step upon his path.
He struggled—heaved as if he gasped for breath—
And all was silent then, as in the hour of death.

At last the swelling of his chest subsides—
The lightnings pass away—a cold smile rides
Upon the writhing of his mighty brow,
And glittering breast—from which his mantle's flow;

Is opening in the tumult of his heart,—
Like the last splendours of the storm, that part,
And on the rolling clouds in softness sleep:—
Or tender moon-light on the troubled deep:
'Hanged!' he repeated—'hang a soldier—no!—
'Soldiers are never hanged.'—Forth stepped his foe:—
'No more—your arms!—a dastard midnight spy
'Should never—never like a soldier die!'
'A spy!—enough'—and forth his falchion flew;
A shrill, quick summons to his band he blew—
Threw off his cloak—against the high rock stood,
And bade him take his sword, who 'dared and would!'
'Charge!' cried the leader, 'charge!' and drew his brand;
Already they encounter, hand to hand—
But pause—for lo!—they meet with men and steeds:—
An arrow from the distant shade proceeds:—
The foremost falls—an Indian rushes out,
And mingles with the horseman's furious shout,
And sabres streaming clash, his thrilling cries;
Short is the conflict—half the foot-band dies.
'Secure them,' cried the chief—I must away:
'Speed to the camp—return by break of day.

The barge hath fled—the Indian, where is he?
The savage man:—no matter—he is free!
Again appears the skimming, light canoe—
Forth from its covert, o'er the watery blue,
With wondrous impulse now it swiftly flies,
Like some young spirit o'er the wintry skies:

Now underneath the cliff—now up a stream
Of ruffled shade, it passes like a dream:
Now shooting 'thwart a tranquil, lovely sheet
Of shining light, it goes as still and fleet,
As that etherial bark that sails on high
Amid the lustre of a dark blue sky:
Now on the flowery bank a light appears—
A cottage nestles:—and an oak uprears,
With all its giant branches, wide outspread,
Above that lonely cot—its thunder-blasted head,
And there the stranger stays: beneath that oak,
Whose shattered majesty hath felt the stroke
Of heaven's own thunder—yet it proudly heaves
A giant sceptre wreathed with blasted leaves—
As though it dared the elements, and stood
The gardian of that cot—the monarch of that wood.

Beneath its venerable vault he stands:
And one might think, who saw his out-stretched hands,
That something more than soldiers e'er may feel,
Had touched him with its holy, calm appeal:
That yonder wave—the heaven—the earth—the air
Had called upon his spirit for her prayer.
His eye goes dimly o'er the midnight scene;
The oak—the cot—the wood—the faded green—
The moon—the sky—the distant moving light—
All!—all are gathering on his dampened sight.
His warriour-helm and plume, his fresh-dyed blade
Beneath a window, on the turf are laid;

The panes are ruddy thro' the clambering vines
And blushing leaves, that Summer intertwines:
In warmer tints than e'er luxuriant Spring,
O'er flower-embosomed roof led wandering.
His pulses quicken—for a rude old door
Is opened by the wind: he sees the floor
Strewed with white sand, on which he used to trace
His boyhood's battles—and assign a place
To charging hosts—and give the Indian yell—
And shout to hear his hoary grandsire tell,
How he had fought with savages, whose breath
He felt upon his cheek like mildew till his death.

Hark!—that sweet song!—how full of tenderness!
O, who would breathe in this voluptuous press
Of lulling thoughts!—so soothing and so low;
Like singing fountains in their faintest flow—
It is as if some holy—lovely thing,
Within our very hearts were murmuring.
The soldier listens, and his hands are prest
In thankfulness, and trembling on his breast:
Now—on the very window where he stands
Are seen a clambering infants rosy hands:
And now—ah heaven!—blessings on that smile!—
Stay, soldier stay—O, linger yet awhile!
An airy vision now appears, with eyes—
As tender as the blue of weeping skies:
Yet sunny in their radiance, as that blue
When sunset glitters on its falling dew:

With form—all joy and dance—as bright and free
As youthful nymph of mountain Liberty:
Or pictured angels dreamt by poesy:
A blooming infant to her heart is prest;
And ah—a mother's song is lulling it to rest!

A youthful mother! God of heaven! is there
A thing beneath the skies, so holy or so fair!

A single bound! our chief is standing there
With eye all rapture—and with brow all bare:
'Bless thee!'—at length he murmured—'bless thee, love!
'My wife!—my boy!'—Their eyes are raised above.
His soldier's tread of sounding strength is gone:
A choaking transport drowns his manly tone.
He sees the closing of that mild, blue eye,
His bosom echoes to a faint low cry:
His glorious boy—springs freshly from its sleep;
Shakes his thin sun-curls, while his eye-beams leap
As half in fear—along the stranger's dress—
Then—half advancing yields to his caress:—
Then—peers beneath his locks, and seeks his eye
With the clear look of careless infancy,
The cherub smile of love, the azure of the sky.

The stranger now is kneeling by the side,
Of that young mother;—watching for the tide
Of her returning life:—it comes—a glow
Goes faintly—slowly o'er her cheek and brow:

A rising of the gauze that lightly shrouds,
A snowy breast—like twilight's melting clouds—
In nature's pure, still eloquence betrays
The feelings of the heart, that reels beneath his gaze.

She lives! she lives:—see how her feelings speak,
Thro' what transparency of eye and cheek!
Her colour comes and goes, like that faint ray,
That flits o'er lilies at the close of day.
O, nature, how omnipotent!—that sigh—
That youthful mother, in her ecstacy
Feels but the wandering of a husbands eye.
Her lip now ripens, and her heaving breast,
Throbs wildly in its light, and now subsides to rest.

And now a father grasps his martial hand:
A mother and a sister leaning stand—
A mother—in her adoration—there!—
With clasping hands and wildly streaming hair;
A sister—with her lip of pulpy red,
Swelling and trembling at his martial tread;
A father—and a soldier! one who feels
All that a father may—and yet his heart conceals.

There they all stand! and thro' their gathering tears,
The smile of gratitude and pride appears;
While o'er his manly form their glances fall;
To see his lordly height—so full—so tall;
The gallant bearing of his swelling chest;
The lofty brow—commanding—and at rest!

His springing port—his strong, determined tread,
That sounded like a threat—the colour spread
In health's effulgent brownness o'er his cheek;
The glance of fire, in which there seemed to speak
The tamelessness of one who'd spend his life
In battle and in storm—in tempest and in strife.

There stands the man of blood! now search his eye;
See ye aught there of that cool mastery,
That dwells on danger with untroubled look?
Aught of that deadly calmness, that will brook
No flame of challenge in another's gaze?
Aught of that desperate meaning which betrays
The eye, that is familiar with the deed
Of midnight battle, where the mighty bleed?
When valour—manhood—perish by the blow
From unseen hands, that lays the coward low?
No—ye may not. That youthful glance less tame
Than the quick flashing of a meteor flame—
Is yet of generous omen:—not the light
That burns vindictive on the blasted sight:
That streams from bloody falchions—lights the field
Of midnight slaughter, where the mighty yield
Their spirits to their God, in silent fight—
The war of murderers—wakened but in night!
His is the flashing eye that courts the day—
The pawing steed—the horn—the full display
Of columns—banners—martial minstrelsy—
The drums of earth—the echoes of the sky—
The trumpet-song of Death and cannon pealing high!

'My son,' the old man said, 'to-morrow night—
'I learn ye mingle in a glorious fight.
'Remember then my words. This form, so old
'Once moved in blood, where mighty Battle tolled
'The warriour-knell in storm. In that dread hour
'My heart was always sad. The sinewy power
'That strung my arm, was not the gallant tide
'That leaps at the far trump in rushing pride.
'The blaze that wrapped my eye, was not the fire
'That kindles redly at the battle quire.
'Religion, and my country nerved my arm,
'Fed my young heart, and kept my eye-beam warm.
'My gallant boy—I know thou art full brave,
'That evening battle ground—may be thy bloody grave!

'Oh no!' the mother cries:—and now they weep
And pray—as we will pray when we're asleep,
With ashy lip—a suffocating prayer—that dies
In broken murmurs, and in struggling sighs:
As we will pray, when thro' the brooding shade
Unholy sights, by Terrour's torch betrayed,
Come thronging, darkly in delirium—
With heavy wing—with cloudy breath—and hum
Of one unceasing knell: that lonely woe—
That sullen boding—like the heavy flow
Of far, far waves, where one we love is sleeping—
When we are set—we know not how—a-weeping.
That young wife stoops,—as she would hide her tears;
And smile with hope while bowing down with fears:

With heart that pants and flutters to be free,
Like some young nestling, stolen from its tree,
That heaves its bosom—shakes its dazzling plume,
A pulse of light and life, entrapped within a tomb!

O, precious are the drops that women shed
Upon the living—dying—or the dead:
They are the silent dews that tell of love;
The sprinkling of the heart; the dews that prove
The fountain of the soul is not yet dry;
The fount that God hath given for extacy!
Whether its tribute on the living fall,
Or mingle with the dew upon the dead man's pall.

Hark!—from the distant shore a summons deep:
One last embrace: once more they meet and weep:
Around that dear, loved group, once more is shed
A farewell smile—a parting tear: then sped
The husband to the war! With unhung brand,
And helmeted for strife he joins his band!

Far and away they are coursing again,
O'er the clouded hill, and the darkened plain,
Now choosing the turf for their noiseless route;
Now where the wet sand is strown thickest about,
Streams their long line! Like a mist troop they ride,
In a winding cloud o'er the near mountain's side;
While a struggling moon, throws a lustre as dim
As a sepulchre's lamp, and the vapours that swim,
O'er the hill and the heavens, divide as they fly:—
The videttes of winds that are stationed on high!

BATTLE OF NIAGARA.

CANTO III.

'TIS dark abroad. The majesty of Night
Bows down superbly from her utmost height:
Stretches her starless plumes across the world;
And all the banners of the winds are furled.
How heavily we breathe amid such gloom!
As if we slumbered in creation's tomb.
It is the noon of that tremendous hour,
When life is helpless, and the dead have power:
When solitudes are peopled: when the sky
Is swept by shady wings that sailing by
Proclaim their watch is set: when hidden rills
Are chirping on their course; and all the hills
Are bright with armour:—when the starry vests
And glittering plumes, and fiery twinkling crests
Of moon-light centinels, are sparkling round,
And all the air is one rich floating sound:

When countless voices, in the day unheard
Are piping from their haunts: and every bird
That loves the leafy wood, and blooming bower,
And echoing cave, is singing to her flower:
When every lovely—every lonely place,
Is ringing to the light and sandaled pace
Of twinkling feet; and all about, the flow
Of new born fountains murmuring as they go:
When watery tunes are richest—and the call,
Of wandering streamlets, as they part and fall
In foaming melody, is all around;
Like fairy harps beneath enchanted ground.
Sweet melancholy musick! like the breath
Of airy flutes that blow, before an infant's death.

It is that hour when listening ones will weep
And know not why: when we would gladly sleep
The last still sleep; and feel no touch of fear,
Till we are startled by a falling tear,
That unexpected gathers in our eye,
While we were panting for yon blessed sky:
That hour of gratitude—of whispering prayer,
When we can hear a worship in the air:
When we are lifted from the earth, and feel
Light fanning wings around us faintly wheel,
And o'er our lids and brow a blessing steal:
And then—as if our sins were all forgiven—
And all our tears were wiped—and we in heaven!

It is that hour of quiet extacy,
When every ruffling wind, that passes by
The sleeping leaf, makes busiest minstrelsy:
When all at once! amid the quivering shade,
Millions of diamond sparklers, are betrayed!
When dry leaves rustle, and the whistling song
Of keen-tuned grass, comes piercingly along:
When windy pipes are heard—and many a lute,
Is touched amid the skies, and then is mute:
When even the foliage on the glittering steep,
Of feathery bloom—is whispering in its sleep:
When all the garlands of the precipice,
Shedding their blossoms, in their moonlight bliss,
Are floating loosely on the eddying air,
And breathing out their fragrant spirits there:
And all their braided tresses in their height,
Are talking faintly to the evening light:
When every cave and grot—and bower and lake,
And drooping flowret-bell, are all awake:
When starry eyes are burning on the cliff
Of many a crouching tyrant too, as if
Such melodies were grateful even to him:
When life is loveliest—and the blue skies swim
In lustre, warm as sunshine—but more dim:
When all the holy centinels of night
Step forth to watch in turn, and worship by their light.

Such is the hour!—the holy, breathless hour,
When such sweet minstrelsy, hath mightiest power:

When sights are seen, that all the blaze of day
Can never rival, in its fierce display:
Such is the hour—yet not a sound is heard;
No sights are seen—no melancholy bird,
Sings tenderly and sweet; but all the air
Is thick and motionless—as if it were
A prelude to some dreadful tragedy;
Some midnight drama of an opening sky!

The Genius of the mountain, and the wood;
The stormy Eagle, and her rushing brood;
The fire-eyed tenant of the desert cave;
The gallant spirit of the roaring wave;
The star-crowned messengers that ride the air;
The meteor watch-light, with its streamy hair,
Threatening and sweeping redly from the hill;
The shaking cascade—and the talking rill
Are hushed to slumber now—and heaven and earth are still.

And now the daylight comes!—slowly it rides,
In ridgy lustre o'er the cloudy tides,
Like the soft foam upon the billow's breast;
Or feathery light upon a shadowy crest;
The morning Breezes from their slumbers wake,
And o'er the distant hill-tops, cheerly shake
Their dewy locks, and plume themselves, and poise
Their rosy wings, and listen to the noise
Of echoes wandering from the world below:
The distant lake, rejoicing in its flow:

The bugles ready cry: the labouring drum:
The neigh of steeds—and the incessant hum
That the bright tenants of the forest send:
The sunrise gun: the heave—the wave—and bend
Of everlasting trees, whose busy leaves
Rustle their song of praise, while Ruin weaves
A robe of verdure for their yielding bark;
While mossy garlands—rich—and full—and dark,
Creep slowly round them. Monarchs of the wood!
Whose mighty sceptres sway the mountain brood!
Whose aged bosoms, in their last decay,
Shelter the winged idolators of day:
Who, mid the desert wild sublimely stand
And grapple with the storm-god hand to hand!
Then drop like weary pyramids away;
Stupendous monuments of calm decay!
As yet the warring thunders have not rent,
The swimming clouds, the brightening firmament,
The lovely mists that float around the sky—
Ruddy and rich with fresh and glorious dye,
Like hovering seraph wings—or robe of Poesy!

Now comes the sun forth! not in blaze of fire
With rain-bow harnessed coursers, that respire
An atmosphere of flame. No chariot whirls
O'er reddening clouds. No sunny flag unfurls
O'er rushing smoke. No chargers in array
Scatter thro' heaven and earth their fiery spray.

No shouting charioteer, in transport flings
Ten thousand anthems, from tumultuous strings:
And round and round, no fresh-plumed echoes dance:
No airy minstrils in the flush light glance:
No rushing melody comes strong and deep:
And far away no fading winglets sweep:
No boundless hymning, o'er the blue sky rings,
In hallelujahs to the King of kings:
No youthful hours are seen. No ribbon lash,
Flings its gay stripings like a rainbow flash,
While starry crowns, and constellations fade
Before the glories of that cavalcade,
Whose trappings are the jewelry of heaven
Embroidered thickly on the clouds of even.

No!—no!—he comes not thus in pomp, and light!
A new creation bursting out of night!
But he comes darkly forth! in storm arrayed
Like the red Tempest marshalled in her shade,
When mountains rock; and thunders travelling round,
Hold counsel in the sky—and midnight trumps resound!

Hark! the deep drums again;—the echoing drums!
Their rousing loudly through the clear air comes.
And trumpets dread hourra!—its plunging blast
Left every heart a-heaving as it past.
In that wild threatening cry, how much of life!
Of martial song!—the minstrelsy of strife.
A flash!—a vapour! from yon fading cloud
The cannon's voice comes suddenly aloud!

Now bursts the smothered war! and proudly rise
Fresh plumes and banners, blazing to the skies!
And farther still, the loud artillery rolls
Uninterrupted thunder to the poles!

That morning sun uprose o'er swelling hearts,
That, ere the evening sun once more departs,
Shall cease to swell on earth. That trumpet's voice
For the last time hath waked them to rejoice:
Yes—many a pulse now freely throbbing there,
Hath heard its requiem in the morning air.

A horseman!—surely we have seen that steed—
His reaching step—his flowing mane—his speed:
The rein is loosened—upward to the heaven,
He leaps, as if the battle blast were given!
That youthful rider, what an awful brow!—
How calm and grand!—and now he nods—and now—
Faith,—'tis a glorious vision! how his hair
Is blown about his brow, as if it were
A living ripeness clustering in the air!
His chest is heaving, and his sunny eye
Goes bright and fearless o'er the clear blue sky:
That lip—that brow—that ardent, piercing look
In battle's wildest uproar never shook:
No frowning—and no effort—always bright,
And always careless—always—even in fight:
And yet that smile of his, that waving hand
And nodding plume, among his chosen band

Have a determined and despotick sway,
O'er hearts and souls,—that never would obey
The lordliest frown that ever sat in cloud;
The stormiest voice that ever raged aloud:
The darkest helm that ever nodded proud:
His is a spirit of that mighty power,
That moves the calmest in the troubled hour:
An eye that, even in danger, threatens not:
That, once encountered, never was forgot:
That even in strife looks forth with beams of peace,
And brightens as the thunders of the battle cease.

His march was victory—and his charger's tread
Hath been familiar with the warriour's bed—
The battle field! His brow was always bare,
His head thrown back, his right arm in the air!
His charger leaping—plunging as he came
And went amid the battle wrapped in flame;
While o'er him waved the star flag, thick with smoke,
Unharmed he sat—and like the thunder spoke:
Nodding his tall plumes to the trumpet's blast
The fiercest in the strife, but when 'twas past,
The first to sheathe his blade—to leave the battle, last.

The drum is rolled again. The bugle sings;
And far upon the wind the cross flag flings
A radiant challenge to its starry foe,
That floats—a sheet of light!—away below,
Where troops are forming—slowly in the night
Of mighty waters; where an angry light

Bounds from the cataract, and fills the skies
With visions—rainbows—and the foamy dies,
That one may see at morn in youthful poet's eyes.

Niagara! Niagara! I hear
Thy tumbling waters. And I see thee rear
Thy thundering sceptre to the clouded skies:
I see it wave—I hear the ocean rise,
And roll obedient to thy call. I hear
The tempest-hymning of thy floods in fear:
The quaking mountains and the nodding trees—
The reeling birds and the careering breeze—
The tottering hills, unsteadied in thy roar:
Niagara! as thy dark waters pour,
One everlasting earthquake rocks thy lofty shore!

There spreads the red cross banner, far and wide,
Flapping its dark blue, as 'tis wont to ride
O'er the red tempest, on the mountain-tide.
The troops of Wellington are there; a veteran band—
Nursed by stern Glory in her favorite land:
The guardians of the Spaniard, when subdued,
And trampled in the dust: a band that stood
Forth with that banner, floating like a shroud,
And battled on the mountain in a cloud
With high—stupendous Gaul, until her genius bowed.

Stern eyes are lifted to it, as it leans
Away upon the breeze: and long past scenes,
Of home and country, o'er the heaving main—
Of fire-side peace, are conjured up again:

Parents—and wife—and children:—and young eyes
Of weeping love, are looking from the skies:
And murmuring prayers are near again:—and dreams
Of parting lips: and many a dark eye beams
Upon its soldiers heart, as it had done,
When they had parted—parted!—all alone.
And every friend they had was going one by one.

From the horizon now, a gathering cloud
Comes darkly o'er the hills; and now a crowd
Of mothers, fathers, sisters, lovers, friends,
Come forth to pray for those, whom Glory sends
In pomp and fever to the field of death;
A throng, who came to pour their erring breath,
To him—the GOD OF PEACE!—who sits on high;
To pray that he will bless the fiery eye;
And bloody hand, that smites in iron wrath
A brother to the dust!—and light the path
Of him who rides, in battle and in blood,
Carving that brother for the shrieking brood,
That snuff the coming war, and drink the vital flood.

Yonder on snow white charger, treading proud;
A red-cross chieftain, goes to meet that crowd:
And aged warriour, and a valiant one:
A hero of the battles that are done.
The pipe sounds cheerly! and their steady tread,
And long, firm steppings, as their columns spread
Their glancing splendours, o'er the distant hill;
Their flapping banners—and their horns that fill

All heaven, and earth, and air with martial song,
As their proud foot-line winds its length along,
Would seem the pageantry of Peace, instead
Of battle cavalcade by Slaughter led.

Who is that drooping one with snowy breast;
Shrinking like virgins when they're first carest;
With full, dark eye, and melancholy smile
And glistening lash, that's standing there the while
That aged man comes up! How pale that cheek!
And yet, how eloquent! O, she can speak
With that dark lash and that slow dropping tear
Unutterable thoughts—when one is near,
In solitude and silence—that is dear.
But see!—she moves—and now her wild dark eye
Is flashing—lifted: something passes by:
A youth in armour! what a glorious face!
And now he reins his barb: with what a grace—
He waves his snowy helmet—and his hand,—
How full of noble spirit and command!
A gallant glorious form—but yet a boy;
An eye of terrour and a lip of joy.
Sure he has lost the rein!—his fiery steed
Goes plunging so, with such a fearful speed:
He has! he has!—a shriek! he has indeed!
That waving of his helm—that loosened rein—
O God—the precipice!—it is in vain—
Yet stay—what death-like silence—now he wheels!
And every heart breathes out: and every bosom feels,

The cool air coming freshly—can it be!
Is that the fiery steed? can this be he?
The rider—that was bending o'er the mane?
This the fierce steed that caught the losened rein?
Foaming he comes, with glossy neck arched high,
And stately step, and wildly rolling eye—
Rattling his bits, and reaching with his head:—
This that fierce steed? why, how composed his tread?
The horseman too, how steady, light and high
Sits that young spirit with his lightning eye,
And smiling lip. See, how his panting breast
Is heaving yet beneath his studded vest.
The gathered rein—the firm, elastick seat
Of airy grace: how young—yet how complete!
Forth flies his blade—the aged warriour comes—
Bow the high banners! roll the answering drums!

And now amid a throng of sparkling eyes
In terrour lifted to the bright blue skies;
Slow tears of thankfulness and joy are flowing;
And round about a languid cheek are blowing,
Rich silkiness and shade: and faintly—slow,
A lovely hand goes o'er a brow of snow—
In woman's meekest—loveliest helplessness:—
The lifeless grace of beauty in distress:
But see! she wakes—and forth with glittering eye,
And burning cheek, and form erect and high,
She steps in light! That melancholy maid
Stands like Minerva for the war arrayed!

How altered! yet how lovely in her change!
How sudden and complete—indeed 'tis strange
That such a transformation should be wrought
So instantaneously—'twas brief as thought.
Now banners float, and mid that tented plain
She and the warriour meet: and and o'er the mane
Of his white steed, he bows—and now———
Presses his old lip to her snowy brow;
'Farewell, my child—farewell!' the warriour says,
His high plume shaking in the sunny blaze;
And glancing to her heart its cheerful dye,
As hurrying—faltering—with averted eye—
That tells for whom the silent prayer is made—
While on her heart one trembling hand is laid,
She waves the other as they speed away,
Where the keen streamers of their Britons play.
A tear came slowly in her wandering eye;
The parting seemed so sad—she knew not why:
As far upon the wind the white steeds flew
Like grey hounds brushing off the heather's morning dew.

Yon sick man, bending to the earth, hath been
In the red strife himself—hath often seen
In other days, a flashing helm laid low,
While yet it shook in triumph o'er its foe:
In that gay band whose tramp is passing far,
That go in revelry and song to war,
That sick man hath a brother—young and brave:
That brother!—he is riding to his grave.

A farewell swinging of his martial hand
Tells to his heart—what soldiers understand—
That he will conquer!—or will bravely lie
With cloven crest and bosom to the sky,
And never tinge his cheek, altho' he dim his eye.

'My last—last hope!' a mother cries, and kneels,
While o'er the hills a sound of tumult reels;
Is it the war-song rushing in the breeze?
Parents and friends, it is the bending trees.
Go speed ye home, and spend your day in prayer;
To-morrow's sun may wake ye to despair.
Go kneel ye on some desert rock, and pray,
Unceasingly and deep, the live long day,
To HIM whose angels calm the stormy fray:
The time is coming when your troubled sleep
Shall throng with bloody ghosts; when ye shall weep
Whene'er the thunders roll—or lightnings stream;
Whene'er the storm talks loud—or panthers scream;
And fancy 'tis the strife, and feel the battle dream.

The cavalcade went by. The day hath gone!
And yet the soldier lives: his cheerful tone
Rises in boisterous song; while slowly calls
The monarch spirit of the mighty falls.
Soldiers be firm!—and mind your watch fires well:
Sleep not to-night!—there comes a distant swell
Like the approaching step of toiling steeds
Encountering on the hills; and far behind us speeds.

Low stooping from his arch, the glorious sun
Hath left the storm with which his course begun;
And now, in rolling clouds goes calmly home
In heavenly pomp a-down the far blue dome.
In sweet toned minstrelsy is heard the cry,
All clear and smooth, along the echoing sky,
Of many a fresh blown bugle, full and strong,
The soldier's instrument! the soldier's song!
NIAGARA too, is heard: his thunder comes
Like far-off battle—hosts of rolling drums.
All o'er the western heaven the flaming clouds
Detach themselves and float like hovering shrouds:
Loosely unwoven, and afar unfurled,
A sunset canopy enwraps the world.
The Vesper hymn grows soft. In parting day
Wings flit about. The warblings die away,
The shores are dizzy, and the hills look dim,
The cataract falls deeper and the landscapes swim.

BATTLE OF NIAGARA.

CANTO IV.

FRESHER and fresher comes the air. The blue
Of yonder high pavillion swims in dew.
The boundless hum that sunset waked in glee:
The dark wood's vesper-hymn to Liberty—
Hath died away. A deep outspreading hush
Is on the air. The heavy, watery rush
Of far off lake-tides, and the weighty roll
Of tumbling deeps, that fall upon the soul
Like the strong lulling of the ocean wave
In dying thunder o'er the sailor's grave:
And now and then a blueish flare is spread
Faint o'er the western heavens, as if 'twere shed
In dreadful omen to the coming dead.
As if—amid the skies, some warriour form
Revealed his armour thro' a robe of storm!

The shadows deepen. Now the leaden tramp
Of stationed sentry—far—and flat—and damp—
Sounds like the measured death-step, when it comes
With the deep minstrelsy of unstrung drums:
In heavy pomp—with pauses—o'er the grave
Where soldiers bury soldiers: where the wave
Of sable plume,—and darkened flags are seen—
And trailing steeds with funeral lights between:
And folded arms—and boding horns—and tread
Of martial feet descending to the bed,
Where Glory—Fame—Ambition lie in state,
To give the nuptial clasp, and wreath that Fate
Wove in the battle storm, their brows to decorate.

Listen!—there comes a distant, wandering shout,
A sound, as if a challenge passed about:
A gun is heard! O, can it be indeed
That on a night, like this, brave men may bleed!
Now comes,—all rushing—with a fiery start—
The struggling neigh of steeds, as if they part
Upon the mountain tops, where cloud-tides break,
And rear upon the winds! and plunge, and shake
Their voices proudly o'er a sleeping lake.
A heavy walk is heard. They come, indeed;
They come, the Star-troops! while the Eagle-breed
Flap loudly o'er each helm, and o'er each foaming steed.

Here, by one side, the red-cross troop is placed:
A lordly banner, never yet disgraced

By that young gallant troop. Beneath its fold
Of blue magnificence, so wide unrolled,
They've bowed, and sworn upon a naked blade,
That banner, there! shall never be betrayed.
They've sworn to bathe it in their heart's best blood:
To loosen 'neath its fold their reddest flood.
No threats escape their lips—th at blue flag flies
O'er the dark lowering of youn g British eyes.
They know the post they hold: they know the hour
Is sternly coming that shall try their power:
They know the Eagle troops: they hear their tread:
And each more proudly heaves his youthful head:
They see the starry banner floating wide:
And fiercer shines their meteor in its pride:
Each plants his foot: and each with steady eye
And hard drawn breath—and forehead to the sky—
Looks on the coming host for life or death,—
The glittering laurel crown, or weeping cypress wreath.

They come! they come!—the starry flag is bright;
Shaking its splendours in the parting light.
Right martial is their step. Their heads are high.
Their chests heave full. Their look is on the sky.
Before his column with a brow serene,
Upon his stately barb, a chief is seen:
His head uncovered;—while his flashing eye
And echoed word along his far ranks fly
With flash and sound as brief as counted musketry.

Now roar the joyous drums! The trumpet-song
Comes swelling—rending—bursting all along!
Like the dread summons by the whirlwind cast,
When she sings fiercely in the coming blast.
That leader waves his sword! the standards bow,
And now unroll upon the wind—and now,
Borne silently aloft, they flash away
Upon the distant wings, like heralds of the day.

Their columns now unfold. Their martial tread
Is firm and steady as they wheel and spread.
Now one deep phalanx in their strength advance,
Silent as death. Dimmed is the banner glance:
The ringing harness and the sabres swing
Is now unheard. No thrilling bugles sing:
No shouting stirs the blood—no waving plume
Gives Glory's signal in the thickening gloom:
But forward—forward!—with unshaken tread
With Battles earthquake march, when shuddering dead
Feel every step that falls above their head.

The soldiers of the red-cross, on the hill
Wave high their matches!—And they stand as still
As if they knew they stood upon their tomb:
But not from fear—or if they did—what then?
Their courage is the soul's!—they are the men
That ye may trust to in the hour of need:
Their lips may fade 'tis true, but they will bleed
Where'er they set their foot until their souls are freed.

Now peals the thronged artillery!—Far, and wide,
Beyond the starry flag its thunders ride!
No answer from the foe.
His steady tread
Paused not a moment as that volley sped.

Again the tempest pours!—In rushing fire,
Again the thunders roll!
But all the higher,
Floats the striped flag—in triumph and in pride;
Like the red rainbow o'er the glimmering tide.

Still onward come its guards: determined—slow:
Mounting as if to grapple with their foe
Within his cloud: While their batallions spread,
And close, and open with the same strong tread,
Revealed in light. That tempest light!—it strays
In one wide sheet: uninterrupted blaze!

Still onward come this band. Still no reply:
Withholding all their might till eye to eye.
They tread the summit of that quaking mount,
To quench that stormy light—that Ætnean fount:
Then will the clouds depart, and ye will see
The Eagle-standard floating far and free:
And gallant warriours on the naked ground
In prostrate adoration to the sound
Of bursting trumpets, and of neighing steeds:
Of waving helms, whose reeking plumage bleeds

With life of gallant hearts, that heave around
In agony to hear the brazen trumpet's sound.

Now comes the bursting strife. The answer peals!
Forth, in a blaze of fire, their squadron wheels!
Now rolls the battle! Fades the lightning sheet!
The charge is given! Bayonets with bayonets meet:
And struggling hearts with hearts: and fiercely rise
Contending shouts and spirits to the skies.
Neighings grow faint. The cannon's thunder dies:
Red Slaughter shakes her storm-plumes o'er the plain,
And flaps her reeking flag:—but all in vain,—
For standards bow! and steeds fly o'er the plain!
Tis done; the strife is o'er. The clouds are gone—
The starry-flag is floating there alone.

And is the battle won? the struggle o'er?
O, no!—the trumpet-song and cannon roar
Have but begun: the night shall wear away
Eer banners blazing in their red display;
And flashing plumes, and helmets glancing bright,
Reveal the conquerers to the dazzled sight.
Then ye shall see the shattered warriour-blade
The banner rent:—quenched plume—and steed, that neighed
Like the fierce trumpet, when the battle pealed,
With all his furniture upon the field,
Bedimmed in gallant blood! Then ye may know
Who were the conquered: they will all lie low

Far now the wet folds of the red cross wave;
Still leaning towards the strife—full, high, and brave:
Still rolls the wide artillery: Still the light
Rushes in boding thickness from that height:
But other hands direct its thunders now;
The rainbow flag is there, with sheeted flow,
And they with silent tread, and cool determined brow.

Amid the fading light on that red ground,
An aged warriour lies, and pours a sound
That tells of battle yet: and feebly tries
To staunch his ebbing wound: to clear his eyes:
And think once more, distinctly, of his home:
But all in vain! a dark, and darker foam
Comes from his heart; and now his dying hand
Is once more stretched—but not as in command—
No! not as if it dealt a warriour's brand—
And lightened thro' the war!—but more in prayer—
As if some child, that he would bless, were there:
Convulsive—sudden—grasping!—towards the heaven
'Tis reached—like one—whose last, last stay is riven.
Not waving—no!—but closing as it goes,
As if it sought another's—not a foe's!
And now it feebler drops—and now again
'Tis lifted as in prayer: but all in vain;
He cannot bless his child!—his strength is gone—
The damps of death are on his brow: his tone
Of murmuring supplication—dies away—
And both his bloody hands are in his locks of grey:

And near him—planted—with the glittering eye,
Of sudden madness, rolling awfully,—
A youthful form is seen—with hands that press
Upon his bosom —fixed and motionless!
Now staring on the armour strown around,
As in a trance: now listening to the sound
Of ruffling banners, as they loosely wave,
Like one that rises armed from his grave
In fierce rebuke. And now—have mercy heaven!
He staggers—waves his arm—his white brow riven,
And streaming with his blood! And O, that nod!—
He moves again in light, as if he trod
Upon the battle's verge—and heaves his brow
Of bleeding nakedness as if e'en now,
It wore the meteor signal for the fight—
The tall plume nodding in its snowy white!
And now he stands as if he would express
Some princely thought and felt his helplessness:
And hark!—a shout!—a sudden thrilling cry—
Of fearful energy—'they fly! they fly!'
Again he waves his arm—and shouts!—again
He stands as if he grasped some charger's mane,
Some struggling barb—and strove to mount in vain:—
Again he shouts!—again he feebly tries
To look once more upon the passing skies—
Clasps his young hands, and reels and falls and dies.

There flutters round him many a gallant soul—
For the last time too, many dim eyes roll:

And gasping—swelling—in the sulphurous air
Sobs many a broken cry, and many a prayer.
Soldiers, and great ones—are around him laid,
Who dealt their broad swords, like the gleaming blade,
That the Destroyer wields, when heaven is wrapped in shade.

The battle comes again. The charging host
Are Britons—chosen ones—their army's boast.
Reddening they come in martyrdom to Fame;
Shaking their snowy plumes in cloud and flame.
Bravely their banner is abroad outspread—
Alive their meteor, and their shroud when dead.
The tumult deepens. Swell conflicting cries:
Neigh the loud steeds, and hurried sobs arise.
Shakes that dark hill with cataracts of fire:
Up go that army to their blazing pyre!
The cannon's voice is mute. The lightning sheet
Grows dim again. Warriours with warriours meet,—
And wrestle fiercely in their rolling cloud.
Again the mountain shakes! again the light
Comes thundering loudly down—the blazing flight
Of starry banners are abroad again,
And neighing—plunging—o'er the clouded plain,
Goes many a fiery barb with crimson reeking mane:
Again the meteors of the war are bowed:
Again the mountain heaves beneath its shroud:
Gushes with quenchless light and shakes and storms aloud.

So darkly clouded was that hill with smoke,
Save when the vast artillery day-light broke,
It seemed a midnight altar. From its gloom,
There came the noise of strife as from a tomb.
And then, distinct, amidst the spreading light
Were seen the struggling champions of the fight,
In silent—desperate—dreadful bayonet strife:
The midnight slaughter! when the hero's life—
The high—stern summons that he gives his band—
His waving falchion—and extended hand—
His towering plume—his charger's bloody mane—
The battle-anthem and the bugle strain—
Are beamless—lifeless! heard and seen no more:
Thus 'tis when bayonets hush the cannon's roar.
The blazing would be gone! and with it, lo!
These darkly wrestling groups would come and go,
Like wizard shapes at night upon the snow—
That glitters to the moon, upon some mountain's brow.

So stood the battle. Bravely it was fought.
Lions and Eagles met. That hill was bought,
And sold in desperate combat. Wrapped in flame,
Died these idolaters of bannered Fame.
Three times that meteor hill was bravely lost—
Three times 'twas bravely won; while madly tost,
Encountering red plumes in the dusky air:
While Slaughter shouted in her bloody lair.
And spectres blew their horns and shook their whistling hair.

A long and dreadful pause. No sound is heard
But the fresh rustling of a mighty Bird,
That sat upon the banner of that host:
That Eagle of the strife!—when tempest tost
The boy that rides sublime the mountain waves,
Looks on that Bird in prayer. The Bird that laves
Her sounding pinions it the sun's first gush—
Drinks his meridian blaze and sunset flush:
Worships her idol in his fiercest hour:
Baths her full bosom in his hottest shower:
Sits amid stirring stars, and bends his beak
Like the slipped falcon, when her piercing shriek
Tells that she stoops upon her cleaving wing,
To drink anew some victim's clear-red spring.
That monarch Bird! that slumbers in the night,
Upon the lofty air-peak's utmost height:
Or sleeps upon the wing—amid the ray
Of steady—cloudless—everlasting day!
Rides with the thunderer in his blazing march:
And bears his lightnings o'er yon boundless arch:
Soars wheeling tho' the storm, and screams away
Where the young pinions of the morning play:
Broods with her arrows in the hurricane:
Bears her green laurel o'er the starry plain.
And sails around the skies and o'er the rolling deeps
With still unwearied wing and eye that never sleeps.

The rustling of that silk alone is heard,
Where burns that soldier idol;—mountain Bird!

And the deep groans of dying men, who heave
Their last sad prayer; of those who bleed and grieve,
In shattered manhood, on the bloody path,
That led where Glory sat in stormy wrath;
The faint, low watchword—and the thronging tramp—
And ringing harness of the distant camp:
And the flood anthem on the night winds blown,
Sullen and heavy as the Thunderer's tone,
When far amid the Alps his chariot rolls,
And the high mountain quakes: and the far poles
Rock in their outspread canopy of cloud:
When seas heave darkly in their tempest shroud,
And everlasting hills are heard to chant aloud:

BATTLE OF NIAGARA.

CANTO V.

YOUNG Morning comes again! with garments blown
Abroad upon the wind; and flowrets thrown
In garland tresses o'er her opening breast
With diamonds dropping from her airy crest.
Young Morning comes again! with laughing eye,
With bustling cherubs thronging up the sky;
And pulling thro' the air by braided flowers
Sweet nature's wicker work! her wild wood bowers!
Young Morning comes again! in floating car
Of tangled roses: o'er the hill of war
She throws her mantle, kindling on the sight,
With all the hues of heaven's own rainbow-light:
Of woven jasper—threaded sapphire—gold:
And sunshine—pearls—embossed upon its fold—
And thickening gems: a diamond flag unrolled!

The sheathless weapon glimmers on the sight:
Pale cheeks and sunken eyes once more are bright—
But not with life, O, no!—their souls have flown:
Their last dread trump amid the fight was blown.
Their feathers glance again; an idle red
Burns o'er their prostrate forms and bloody bed.
Here, was the deadliest strife! this youthful group
Are the last remnants of a martyred troop.
Here their young banner waved! and here—they fell!
There lies that banner!—let its fragments tell,
Yet grasped in life—if 'twas defended well.
The rich, green sward is bared by struggling hoofs;
And all along the field are seen the proofs
Of soldier-rivalry. Opposing plumes, and crests
Of snow and crimson, are the silent tests
That prove where soldiers met—and strove—and died!
In pairs they lie—embracing—side by side.
A strong, strong death was theirs: their hard-clenched hands;
Their mingled trappings, and their hiltless brands:—
The desperate grasp—the half raised form!—and eye
Yet lowering with the threat of agony:
The bleeding banner and the dripping crest:
The dying war-horse, with his heaving chest,
Yet struggling to arise, and o'er the plain
Blaze forth in dimmed caparisons again—
And loosen to the wind his crimson steaming mane!

O, there's no mockery like the morning light,
Smiling o'er relicks of a bloody night:

Like a red lustre on a barren mount:
Like the rich moon-beam o'er a silent fount,
Swimming in feverish splendour, while it tells,
But the more certain, where the turf-home swells—
Where Hope is stretched in death, and Desolation
dwells.

Upon that mountain altar, thick are laid,
The midnight victims to the Battle-shade:
Slain in the darkness, by an unseen hand—
With eye half closed—dead hair—and shivered brand:
In solitude they lie!—with no friend near:
Not stretched in soldier pomp upon the bier,
With the high casque—and crimson plume—and sword:
With blow of trumpets—roll of drums—and word
Of slow command,—and dragging tramp of steeds—
And all the pageantry the dead man needs—
The banner stretching dark, and float of dusky weeds.

Hear ye that sound? 'twould make the stoutest quail:
It is the mourning—lamentation—wail
Of outbreathed hearts, that load the morning air;
Of those who kneel among the dead in prayer,—
Collecting relicks—locks of bloody hair.
Who thinks of battle now! The stirring sounds
Spring lightly from the trumpet, yet who bounds
On this sad—still—and melancholy morn,
As he was wont to bound, when the fresh horn
Came dancing on the winds; and pealed to heaven!
In gone-by hours, before the battle-even?

The very horses move with halting pace:
No more they heave their manes with fiery grace—
With plunge—and reach—and step that leaves no trace:
No more they spurn the bit, and sudden fling
Their light hoofs on the air! The bugles sing;
And yet the meteor mane, and rolling eye
Lighten no longer at their minstrelsy.
No more their housings blaze: no more the gold,
Or purple, flashes from the opening fold:
No rich—wrought stars are glittering in their pride
Of changing hues: all—all! is crimson-dyed.
They move with slow—far step: they hear the tread
That measures out the tombing of the dead:
The cannon speaks: but now, no longer rolls
In heavy thunders to the answering poles.
But bursting suddenly, it calls, and flies—
At breathless intervals along the skies,—
As if some viewless centinel were there,
Whose challenge peals at midnight thro' the air:
Each sullen steed goes on—nor heeds its roar:
Nor pauses when its voice is heard no more:
But snuffs the tainted breeze, and lifts his head—
And slowly wheeling—with a cautious tread—
Shuns,—as in reverence—the mighty dead:
Or rearing suddenly! with flashing eye,
Where some young war-horse lies—he passes by.
Then with unequal step he smites the ground,
Utters a startling neigh—and gazes round—
And wonders that he hears no answering sound.

This!—while his rider can go by the bier
Of slaughtered men, and never drop a tear.
And only—when he meets a comrade there—
Stretched calmly out—with brow and bosom bare,—
And stiffened hand uplifted in the air,—
With lip still curled,—and open, glassy eye,
Fixed on the pageant that is passing by;—
And only then—in decency will ride
Less stately in his strength—less lordly in his pride:

Now shouts the trump again! The muskets ring!
Drums travel loud! and merry bugles sing!
And once more, in the breeze, the rainbow-banners
swing!

Such sounds are wanted, when the morning red
Comes warm and richly o'er unburied dead:
The brawling drum must roll: the keen-toned fife,
Must sting the sluggish pulses into life;
Or all that had survived, would kneel in prayer;
And pour their hearts out in the morning air;
And consecrate their bloody swords to Peace;
And call for mercy, loud; and never cease
Their supplications, till the God of Heaven
Had offered them some sign that murder was forgiven.

Come, Glory, come! Let's chaunt the soldier's dirge:
Step from thy thrones, and from thy clouds emerge!
Bring thy black cypress clotted in the shade:
Of weeping-willow let a wreath be made

To crown the warriour-brow, that lately sought
Thy battle-laurel: him who lately fought
Reddest and fiercest, where the war-god sung;
Where the loud death-sobs came, and falchions rung:
Twine him a heavy garland! steep it well;
And mutter o'er its gloom thy darkest spell;
With broken heart-strings be it twisted round;
Tread it in wrath upon the soaking ground;
And where the stagnant blood lies deepest, there
Complete thy curse—the chaplet of despair!
Call back his spirit from the Eternal bar:
Show him that clotted foliage—talk of war:
Wake thy swift bugle, let it sing away
Freshly and clear, like clarion of the day!
Loosen thy banners on the mountain winds!
Call up thy thunders!—while thy hot hand binds,
That wreath around his mad, consuming brain—
Tell him 'tis his reward!—will he complain
Of wasted life—of bloody hand arrayed
In sacrifice for thee?—when blade met blade;
And man met man, and like the desert beast,
That bleeds and battles till his breath has ceased;
Toiled dark upon the mount to spread the vulture's feast.

A solemn march is heard: a measured tread:—
Banners are furled again—and o'er the dead,
The crimson pall, by martial hands, is spread.
A band on foot approach, they bear a form
Like the rent mountain oak, that braves the storm,—

Heaves its young branches to the raging skies—
Receives the Thunderer's bolt—and prostrate lies!
Whence is that band—and whose the form they bear—
With high—pale brow, and darkly clustered hair?
That hair is wet—but not with dews of night;
Its lifeless length was loaded in the fight.
Disfigured—motionless—with bosom bare—
And arm—still stretched abroad!—he slumbers there.
He was careering in the hottest fight;
His black barb leaping in his stormy might;
His banner—floating loudly on the ear,
As if some mighty Bird were hovering near:
His starry troops were conquering at his side;
Their plumes were blazing in their fiercest pride—
When suddenly—his heart!—its lordly swell
Was gone forever!—as he dimly fell,
His hand once stretched his sabre to his foes!
His form dilated!—more erect he rose!—
His dark eye flashed once more!—but flashed in vain:
His wounded charger felt the loosened rein:—
Felt the strong hand that grasped his bloody mane—
And sprang to bear him off!—One desperate bound—
One gallant neigh he gave!—and on the ground
Stretched his dark limbs—triumphantly—and died!
On the wide battle-field in warriour pride;
Far from the noise of strife, and by his master's side.

Know ye, that form—those features—and that air?
Have ye e'er seen that thickly clustered hair?

That!—was the brown-cheeked youth, with eye of fire,
Who rode a courser like the winds. His sire
Bows proudly o'er his corse. His bloody bier
With precious dew is bathed:—the cold sad tear—
The heart's last offering! o'er those ruins fall,
That lie concealed beneath a bleeding pall:
And one is there, whose trembling hands are prest
In desperate calmness on her swelling breast:
Whose mute—pale lip—whose sadly wandering eye
Speaks more than sorrow—suffering—agony!—
While gazing tearless on the form before her;
Father of Mercies! Father! Oh, restore her!

GOLDAU,

OR

THE MANIAC HARPER.

THIS story is not a fiction: the principal circumstances stand on record. On the 3d of September, 1806, about sunset, the Spitzberg, a part of mount Rosburg, in the canton of Schweitz, Switzerland, slid from its base; and from a height of more than two thousand feet, overwhelmed three whole villages, and upwards of fifteen hundred peasants; leaving the rocks all naked in its path, and transforming an extensive valley into a hill. Among the villages destroyed was GOLDAU, the most romantick and beautiful of the three. I knew a young man abroad, who lost every friend he had on earth in that hour of calamity. He had been a soldier, and was subject to occasional derangement; was a poet, gifted with a magnificent imagination; and played the harp with a masterly hand: still farther—for I am willing to confess how little I am indebted to fancy for any interest, whatever, that may be excited by these simple verses—the most affecting circumstance is a fact faithfully related: I have myself seen him—at sunset—on the summit of a high cliff—pouring forth his wild musick, accompanied by his thrilling voice, until I have felt a degree of enthusiasm, probably more animating and exalting than I shall ever again experience.

THE AUTHOR.

GOLDAU,

OR THE MANIAC HARPER.

UPON a tranquil—glorious night,
When all the western heaven was bright;
When, thronging down the far blue dome,
The sun in rolling clouds went home:
There wandered to a goat-herd's cot
A youth—who sought to be forgot:
Who many a long and weary year
Had breathed his prayer and shed his tear.
Beneath his look of cloud was seen,
Somewhat, that told where fire had been;
For yet, a sorrowing beam was there:
A beam—in mockery of despair:
A beam that gave enough of light
To show his soul had set in night.

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His step was slow—his form was bowed:
But yet his minstrel-air was proud:
Upon the mountain's height he stood,
And looked abroad o'er wave and wood
Yet glowing with the blush of even
And answering to the hues of heaven,
With such a melancholy grace,
He seemed as thus he stood alone,
Like some young Prince upon his throne—
The genius of the lofty place!

He wore high plumes—a glittering vest—
And to his half uncovered breast,
An antique harp was strongly prest:
And, ever and anon, its strings
Gave musick to his wanderings:
While he would pause to see unrolled,
O'er heaven's blue arch, the crimson fold—
And purple plumes and wings of fire—
And visions—till his trembling lyre
Would shake a distant, thrilling note,
Like some sweet pipe in heaven afloat;
And then as calmly die away
As sunset hues in fading day—
As rose-tints on the quiet stream
Awakened by a passing beam:
As flashing wings that flit in play
Around the couch of infant day:
As songs that Evening hears, when all
Are listening to the quiet fall

Of airy melodies, that come,
From heaven, in one sweet murmuring hum.
And he would pause and o'er it bend,
As if it were his only friend.
And he would send it trembling round—
With touch—so magical and free—
So full of sweet simplicity—
And tenderness—and extacy—
It seemed indeed no earthly sound.

And those who heard him as he leant
Upon its lonely wires, and sent
His agitated voice away,
In feeling's broken roundelay—
Would wonder—weep—and hold their breath
As if they heard the hymn of death:
And when the spell was broken—gone—
Its sad enchantment all withdrawn—
Would smile to see the trembling tear
On other downcast lids appear—
Nor e'er suspect themselves had given
A tribute to these sounds of heaven!
And all who heard him then, believed
That he had loved—and been deceived:
Or seen the stooping willow wave
Its tresses o'er a loved one's grave:
For such his melancholy song,
That every listener's heart was weeping
Like youthful lovers, when they're sleeping
In sorrows that they would prolong.

But those who heard the voice he sent
When battle was his theme:
Who saw his gorgeous vestment rent—
His quenchless eye—the lights that went
Beneath his brow of gathered night,
Like meteors that go forth at night,
In one continual stream!
And those who heard his ardent cry,
And all his harp-strings pealing high:
Who saw his stern, uplifted brow—
His sweeping arm—his vestment flow—
The heaving of his youthful chest,
Beneath that mailed and glittering vest—
Who marked the martial belt that bound
His youthful form so closely round—
His attitude—so proud and high—
With look uplifted to the sky—
And outstretched arm, and waving hand,
As if it waved a conquering brand—
And high plumed bonnet nodding low
Whene'er he trod, as if it gave
To some young supplicating foe,
A rescue o'er an opening grave!—
Yes! those who saw all this, would feel
Enthusiasm o'er them steal
So unexpectedly,—they stood,
Like men, who, mid a solitude,
Have heard a sudden trumpet-peal!

Their hearts would swell and they would rise—
And stand erect with flashing eyes—
And toss their arms unconsciously—
And join the shout of victory!
And when the summons died away
Like battle at the close of day:
Would feel—as they had been in fight,
And wearied with their deeds of might:
Would stand entranced—or start, and seem
As bursting from a stormy dream:
Or gaze with troubled air around,
And wonder whence that trumpet sound!
And whither it had flown!—or hear
The tumult yet—distinct and clear—
Now pealing far—now ringing near,
And bursting on the startled ear!
As if a host had stooped from heaven
Upon the winds that blow at night;
And all their harps and trumps had given
A farewell to departing light!

And then, the glitter of each eye,
That kindled at his minstrelsy—
That lightened, when the echoing blast
Far o'er the hills in triumph past;
That varied with the varying note
Upon the eddying air afloat—
Would with that varying note decay
And melt so peacefully away,
That each who saw his neighbour's cheek
The tumult of his soul bespeak—

And saw the maddening lustre die
There reddening like an angry sky—
And saw each upright youthful form
Awake like genius of the storm,
With lifted brow and threatening air,
While pealed the battle anthem there—
And saw it as that anthem died
Lose all its stateliness and pride;
With yielding port and fading eye—
And heard his furious shouting die:—
Would wonder that himself bad been
So undisturbed!—and so serene!
And this would be—while yet *he* stood
In that delicious solitude
When youthful hearts feel all alone—
  Alone amid the world!
When Phrensy leaves her radiant throne,
And all her singing troops have flown:
  And all their wings are furled!

  And this would be while yet the fire
Enkindled by that wonderous lyre,
Was quivering on his downcast lash,
Just like the dying tempest-flash!
And those who felt their bosoms swell
Beneath the working of that spell:
Who felt that young enchanter's might,
Whose incantations woke the fight,
And taught to peasant-hearts the feeling
That mounts to hear the trumpet pealing,

Then—deemed the youthful minstrel there
Familiar with the strife had been:
And that his sad, appealing air—
His darkened brow—his bosom bare—
His haughty port of calm despair—
Enthusiasm—genius were—
And never but in warriours seen!

But those who knew him, knew full well
That something terrible once fell
Upon his heart, and froze the source
Whence comes enthusiasm's force—
Something of icy touch that chills:
The heart-drops of our youthful years:
Something of withering strength that kills
The flowers, that Genius wets with tears—
Fetters the fountain in its flow:
Mildews the blossom in its blow:
And breathes o'er fancy's budding wreath
The clotting damps of early death:
That spreads before the opening light—
The sunshine of the heart!—
A cloud that tells of coming night,
And chills the warblers in their flight,
That twinkling gaily to the skies,
With piping throats and diamond eyes,
In unfledged strength depart.

Something—but what was never known:
Something had pressed his pulses down:

Blasted the verdure of his spring:
Shorn the gay plumage of his wing:
Silenced his harp, and stilled his lyre:
Heaped snow upon his bosom's fire—
And caught away the wreath of flame
That hovered o'er his youthful name,
Obscured his sun—and wrapped the throne
Where Glory in her jewels shone,—
Forever from his searching gaze:
And, on his brain, in lightning traced
The suffering of his youthful days:
Where Madness had with clouds erased
The characters, that Rapture placed
Upon his heart and soul in blaze!

'Tis true, that there were those who saw—
And whispered what they said in awe—
That nought beneath the skies but guilt;
Nought but the cry of blood that's spilt;—
Could so unman a form so young—
A heart so high and firmly strung:
But such—whene'er they saw his eye
Uplifted to the dark-blue sky
In such a generous confidence—
When night was forth—would feel a tear—
And in their *virtue* would appear—
More fearful of Omnipotence!

His faded plumes, and vestment torn
Were less like those by minstrels worn,

Than like the garb of youthful knight:
Caparisoned for glorious fight;
Equipped beneath his lady's eye
To couch his lance for chivalry:—
To charge in tournament or strife—
For wreath or scarf—for death, or life.—
And once, 'twas said, his full, black eye,
When a young war-horse bounded by—
Awoke at once!—and lightnings keen,
As on the falchion's point are seen—
Flashed forth!—then vanished from the sight
And darkened into tears!
And dimly o'er his brow there past
A shade of memory—'twas the last—
And first for many years.

Yes—something once *had* touched his brain—
No matter—he would ne'er complain—
Had misery left him with the power
To tell the suffering of that hour:—
But—as it was, the fearful cause
Of all the scenes that madness draws—
That curse of Genius!—all that awes!—
That reft his heart—and bowed his pride,
To him was known—to none beside:
And all *he* knew, was but a dream
Of sleepless agony:—the beam,
That shone upon his maniac way,
Was but the melancholy ray,

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To him was known—to none beside:
And all *he* knew, was but a dream
Of sleepless agony:—the beam,
That shone upon his maniac way,
Was but the melancholy ray,

That plays o'er churchyards, when the Night
Reveals her phantoms to the sight:
'Twas but the lurid, wandering beam:—
The troubled lightning of a stream:
Or stricken armour's hasty gleam;
'Twas but the light that meteors shed;
That faintly watches o'er the bed,
Where Desolation guards the dead:
The splendours of the storm, that show
Temples and monuments laid low;
And altars shattered by that God
Whose thunders roll but once—whose nod
But once in wrath, is ever given—
When temples fall—and spires are strown;
And Empire totters from her throne;
And prostrate Idols bow to heaven!

Such is the awful light that plays
Around his steps! the meteor blaze
That goes before Destruction's path!
That follows the Destroyer's wrath,
When o'er the blessed earth are seen,
Their footsteps in the blasted green:
And pyramids and statues thrown
In ruin o'er the earth—o'ergrown
With savage garlands,—living wreaths,
Of creeping things,—while poison breathes
From every chaplet—every crown—
And every wonder that is down—

As if in mockery of their power—
The dread immortals of an hour:
As in derision of their strength
Thus prostrate—rent—and strown at length.
Such is that minstrel's memory yet;
The very page he should forget,
Of all the volume of his days,
Is ever opened in its blaze!
And all the rest is from his sight
Enveloped in eternal night!
The ruins of his hopes are seen,
And ruins only!—all the rest—
That in their days of light have been,
Are darkly shrouded in his breast.

His sufferings, and his home unknown;
A madman—and a minstrel—thrown
Upon the barren mountain, goes
Unharmed, amid his nature's foes:
Protected by the peasants prayer,
He wanders thro' the dark woods, where
Abides the she-wolf in her lair:
Such prayers are his—are his forever!
And ne'er will be refused—O, never!
For never yet, there shone the eye,
Could let him pass unheeded by;
And every heart—and every shed,
Gave welcome to that maniac's tread:
And peasant-babes would run to cheer
His footsteps, as he wandered near:

And every sunny infant eye,
Grew sunnier as his step came nigh:
And when he went at night alone,
Where mighty oaks in fragments strown,
Proclaimed the revels of the storm—
He went in safety: o'er his form
There hung a mute, but strong appeal,
That those, who rend the clouds, might feel:
Unharmed, upon the cliff he'd stand,
And see the Thunderer stretch his wand,
And hear his chariots roll:
And clap his hands—and shout for joy!—
Thus would that glorious minstrel-boy:
When lightnings wrapped the pole!
And he would toss his arms on high,
In greeting as the arrows flew:
And bare his bosom to the sky;
And stand with an intrepid eye,
And gaze upon the clouds that past,
Uprolling o'er the mountain blast,
And wonder at their depth of blue:—
Then—wildly toss his arms again,
As if he saw the rolling main;
And heard some ocean-chant anew:
As if upon each passing cloud,
He saw the Tempest harping loud
Amid her fiery-bannered crew.

The tempting precipice was hidden;
The angels of the storm forbidden

To strive upon his wasting frame—
The powers of air! enrobed in flame—
Whose thrones are everlasting hills,
Whose army, all creation, fills:
Who ride upon the roaring main;
And listen to to battle strain;
The thunders of the deep, and song
Of trumpets busting all along;
When streamers flash, and banners blaze,
And tall plumes bow, and lightning strays
O'er Ocean's dull-blue billows,
And far amid the clouds are seen,
Young angels hands, that twine the green
Of laurels, dripping gallant blood,
With sea-weed from the stormy flood,
And thunder blasted willows.

The sunset was his favourite hour:
His eye would light—his form would tower;
And kindle at departing day,
As if its last, and loveliest ray
Would win his very soul away;
And there were those, who, when he stood,
Sublime in airy solitude,
Upon his mountain's topmost height,
With arms outstretched, to meet the light—
With form bowed down, as if it were
In worship to the fiery air;
Who—had he been from eastern climes,
From sunnier hills—in earlier times—

When thus he bowed him to the sky—
Had charged him with idolatry:
For when he bowed, he bowed in truth:
His adoration was the thought
And worship, that from heaven is caught
When genius blossoms in its youth.

'Twas feeling all, and generous love—
The reaching of the soul above:—
The intellectual homage pure,
That is sincere, and will endure:
It was the offering of the heart,
The soul—and pulse—and every part
That's noble in our frames, or given
To throb for suns, or stars, or heaven:
The spirit that is made of flame,
Forever mounting whence it came:
The pulse that counts the march of time,
Impatient for the call sublime,
When it may spring abroad and climb:
The heart, that by itself is nurst,
And heaves, and swells, till it hath burst:
That never yields—and ne'er complains—
And dies—but to conceal its pains,
And the bright flashing glorious eye
Forever open on the sky,—
As if in that stupendous swell,
He sought a spot, where he might dwell,
And pant for immortality.

That minstrel watched when others slept,
But when the day-light came—he wept
For tho' a maniac, he could see
That sunshine sports with misery:
He dwelt in caverns—and alone—
Held no communion, but with one:
And that was but a peasant's child,
A young enthusiast;—a wild
And melancholy girl, whose heart
Was subject to his wonderous art—
She was a sad and lonely one,
And she too loved the evening sun:
The twilight mantle when its blue
Is dropped with light, and wet with dew:
When watery melodies find birth,
And heaven itself seems nearer earth:
She never led the mountain race;
She never joined the insect chase;
Or left her solitary place,
To join the dance, or trill the song:
Or o'er the cliffs, to bound along;
But all alone—in silence, where
The rocky cliff stood cloudless—bare—
With folded arms and loosened hair—
And robe abroad upon the air—
And turbaned wreath and streaming feather,
Would stand for hours and hours together!
And listen to the song that came
Tumultuous from a neighbouring height,
And watch that minstrel-boy in flame,
While harping to the god of light.

That wild one had a feeling heart!
And when the minstrel would depart,
To wander o'er the hills, and stray
Upon the beetling cliff—his way,
By morn and noon, in sun and shade,
Was lighted by that dark eyed maid:
And when he trod a dangerous height,
Her shout would lead the wanderer right:
And he would then submissive turn,
And smile as if he felt her care:
And, when they met, his cheek would burn,
As if he knew what led her there.

No other voice could stay his course:
Her's was the only earthly force
To which he yielded, when he went
In worship towards the firmament.
She saw beneath that cloudy air
The heart of flame imprisoned there:
For every glance that left his eye
When pealed his bursting minstrelsy;
And every shout he sent away,
When woke his stormy battle-lay;
And every sweeping of his hand,
Showed one accustomed to command:
And then—the sounds he always chose,
In tempest or in tears, were those
That only generous hearts can feel

And only generous hearts conceive:
For they were still the challenge peal—
The charge that makes the young heart reel,
Or lordly spirits stoop, and grieve.

These were his everlasting themes:
And these the echo of his dreams:—
The neigh of steeds, the bugle cry
Of battle or of victory:
The roar of wind—and rush of water:
The blaze of heaven, cry of slaughter:—
The thunders of the rolling deep
Whose monarchs starting from their sleep,
Outstretch their sceptres o'er the wave
And call their spirits from the grave:
When every billow starts to life,
Contending in the foamy strife—
For diadem of dripping green,
Entwined by Ocean's stormy queen.
These were for aye, his chosen themes
But he would sing full oft, it seems,
With tenderer touch, and tenderer note
Such airs as o'er the waters float—
When symphonies of evening rise
In whispers to the listening skies—
And swell and die so soft away
We think some minstrel of the day
Is piping on its airy way:
Or some sweet songstress of the night
Waves musick from her wings in flight:

A lulling—faint—uncertain song—
That but to spirits can belong:
To happy spirits too—and none
But those, who in the setting sun,
Expand their thin bright wings, and darting,
Spin musick to their god in parting:
Who has not heard these quiet airs
Come like the sigh of heaven that bears,
A soothing to his toiling cares:
As if some murmuring angel guest
Within his void and echoing breast
Were fanning all his thoughts to rest?
Who has not felt when sounds like these,
Like prayers of lovers on the breeze—
Came warm and fragrant by her cheek
Oh, more than mortal e'er may speak!
As if unto her heart she'd caught
Some instrument that to her thought,
Gave answering melody and song,
In murmurings like an airy tongue:
And echoing in its insect-din,
To every pulse and hope within,
  Had set her thoughts to fairy numbers!
Or if she ne'er has fancied this
This doubtful and bewildering bliss—
Has she not dropped the lingering tear
And fancied that some one was near
Invisible indeed, but dear—
  The guardian of her evening slumbers!

Such were the sounds that ye would hear
When that strange boy would call the tear:
A deep and low complaining tone—
Like lover's vows when, all alone,
Upon some budding green he kneels,
And listens to the sound that steals
From some fresh woodbined lattice near,
When all that to his soul is dear,
Is at her grateful vesper hymn—
When bright eyes in their prayers grow dim:
Sounds faintly uttered,—half suppressed—
Like fountains whispering to the blest:—
Or the subduing smothered tones
That sob upon the air like groans,
Of those who broken hearted stand
Before some youthful—gallant friend:
Of those who kneel and hold their breath
By loved ones touched with sudden death:
Or sounds like chantings from a tomb,
When spirits sit amid the gloom
And melancholy garlands weave;
And twine the drooping lilly wreath—
And withered wildflowers from the heath,
To crown the maiden brow, that lies
Unkissed by Nature's mysteries:
To sprinkle o'er a virgin's bed
The blossoms that untimely shed—
Have budded—flourished to deceive.

That girl with ripe dark hair, was wild
As Nature's youngest, freest child:
As artless—generous—and sincere—
As blushes when they first appear—
Or Rapture's unexpected tear:
Her's was the sudden crimson flush
And her's the rich spontaneous gush:
Of hearts when first in youth they're prest
And can't conceal that they are blest:
Her downcast eye, and pale smooth brow:
The heaving of her breast of snow:—
The murmuring of her voice—and tread
That faultered in its youthful dread:—
Would ever to the eye reveal,
What all but mountain nymphs conceal:
And she, before that boy, would stand
With lifted brow and outstretched hand—
As if she felt a holy awe;—
And all her heart was in her eyes,
And all her soul would seem to rise—
While thus she stood for hours and gazed
Upon that minstrel boy—amazed
At all she heard and all she saw.

She knew the dreadful reason why
He dwelt upon the sunset sky;
For once as they together stood
Above the torrent and the wood;
In breathless—sunny solitude—

To see the ruddy clouds of even
Go blushing o'er the vault of heaven:
The richest—warmest—loveliest scene
That had for many an autumn been:—
There came a sullen labouring sound,
As if an earthquake rose around:
The minstrel uttered one low cry
Of sudden—thrilling agony—
And clasped his hands with look of fire—
And threw away his antique lyre—
And caught the maiden to his heart,
And bore her down the hill!
Oh, who may now the strength impart
To check that madman's will!

Where is the arrow or the bow:—
The Thunderer's bolt—to lay him low,
Sent forth by heaven in wrath!
The lightning shaft, that fiercely thrown,
Hath brought the mountain spoiler down,
In ruins o'er his path!
Have mercy heaven!—his desperate course,
Is like the stormy torrent's force,
When forth from some high, cloudy steep,
In foaming light 'tis seen to leap:—
Now bursting on the eye!
Now flashing darkly on its way—
And flinging now, its fiery spray
In rainbows to the sky!

Thus—thus the ravisher went forth;
Like meteors o'er the cloudy north:
Thus—thus the desperate boy went down,
In splendour o'er the mountain's brown:
His vestment streaming far behind,
And glittering in the rushing wind:
His dancing plumage tipped with light,
Like eaglets in their loftiest flight,—
As now he darted on the sight,
And met the sun's last ray:—
Now hidden in the forest shade—
Emerging now—and now betrayed
By plumes that in the sunset played;
And robe that seemed to blaze!

But once she caught his eye of flame;
But then!—O, how distracting came
Her self-reproach, for all that led
Her heart to watch a madman's tread!
Still—still he bounds from cliff to cliff,
Like some light vaulting, airy skiff—
Upon the stormy billows tost,
When all but hope and faith are lost:
Still—still he plunges on his course;
Still straining on with maniac force—
From rock to rock, as if he were
Some spirit sporting on the air:
Unconscious of the dying maid,
That on his naked breast is laid—

Her hair flows loose—her dark eyes close,
Fled is the faintly breathing rose,
That lately tinged her cheek:

Sudden his dread descent is staid—
One bound!—his lifeless charge is laid
Upon a bank, and he is near,
Half kneeling in his maniac fear:
And now she moves!—her head she raises—
She starts, and round in terrour gazes—
With wild half-uttered shriek—
For lo! before her bows a form,
Like some young genius of the storm—
And while she gazes on his eye,
Uplifted in idolatry,
She hears a stranger speak!

Gone is the madman's savage air—
His pale denouncing look is gone—
His port of sullen, calm despair—
And gone, indeed, the madman's tone!
His cheek burns fresh—his eye is bright,
And all his soul breaks forth in light!
His steps is buoyant, and his hair
Is lightly lifted by the air;
And o'er his reddening cheek, and eye,
Upraised in feverish extacy,

Is blown so carelessly, he seems
Some youthful spirit sent from high,
Clad in the glories of the sky—
With locks of living shade, that flow
About a brow of driven snow;
Or like the forms that pass at night,
Arrayed in blushing robes of light,
In Fancy's sunniest dreams.

And but that still his well-known tears,
And faded vestment quelled her fears,
She had believed the form that knelt,
Whose maniac pressure yet she felt,
Was not the minstrel boy that went,
In worship to the firmament:
She wondered—wept—and breathed one prayer—
Then felt in more than safety there:
'Ellen!' he faintly said, and smiled,
As prostrate at her feet he knelt—
'Ellen!'—again his eye looked wild—
Again he rose—as if he felt,
And would assuage, some sudden pain,
That darted through his rocking brain:
He paused—and o'er his throbbing brow—
His hand went doubtfully, and slow—
Indignant brushed a falling tear,
And saw that dark-eyed girl appear,
In awful loveliness, and youth
Enthusiasm—tears—and truth:—

And then was bent that maniac's pride,
His arms dropped lifeless at his side—
In Nature's own supremacy—
  And Youth's tumultuous feeling—
Already in his extacy,
  The maniac boy was kneeling:
When once again—a lightning pain—
Went flashing through his clouded brain,
  Where Reason was revealing:

It went, and then a deeper night
Succeeded to its blazing flight,
The maniac sprung erect from earth,
  And tossed his arms abroad in air:
Like some young spirit, at its birth—
  Some nursling of the fiend Despair:
Uttered one thrilling, dreadful cry,
And darted towards the darkening sky
  One fierce reproachful look;
Gathered his mantle round his form,
And then, like those who rend the storm,
  His upward course he took.

  The strife was o'er!—he was again
The minstrel-boy, with maniac brain:
The strife was o'er!—the madman's air
Returned forever—and Despair
Hath hung her cloud forever there!

Again he climbs the mountain's height:
Again he hails departing light:
Again his soul is forth in strength:
Again his vestment flows at length;
Again the mountain-echoes ring:
Again his harp is wandering:
Again his chords are wildly strung—
And these the measures that he sung!

THE MINSTREL'S SONG.

Ye who would hear a mournful song,
Such as the desert bird may sing,
When sailing on her languid wing
By sunny cliffs and lifeless woods—
And silent blooming solitudes—
And watery worlds—and cloudless hills—
Unmurmuring founts and sleeping rills—
She hears on high the distant note,
Of some sweet airy tune afloat—
That to the birds of heaven belong!

Ye who have heard in the still of the night,
When the soul was abroad in her uppermost flight,
The whispering of trumpets and harps in the air.
Who have heard, when the rest of the world were asleep,
As ye sat all alone o'er the measureless deep,
The spirits of earth and of heaven at prayer!

When the stars of the air, and the stars of the water,
Were peaceful and bright as the innocent beam
That plays o'er the lid in its happiest dream:
When the song of the wind as it feebly arose;
With the gush of the fountain, whose melody flows.
For hearts that awake when the world are at rest,
Came over your soul like the airs of the blest:
When ye thought ye could hear from the height of the sky
The musick of peace going tenderly by—
The girl ye had loved!—and the song ye had taught her!

Ye who would love such airy songs,
As listening solitude prolongs,
When from the height of yon blue dome,
The moon-light trembles to the earth!
And angel melodies find birth;
And musick sighs in her echoless home!

Come ye and listen! I will sing
What led my senses wandering.

Or, would ye hear the rending song
Bursting tumultuously along?
The challenge—charge—and pealing cry—
And shock of armies—when on high
Broad crimson banners flaunt the sky—
And sabres flash—and helmets ring—
And war-steeds neigh—and bugles sing

When comes the shout, they fly!—they fly!
And echoing o'er the dark blue sky
The cannon's thunder rolls!
When all the heaven is rolling shade—
And lightnings stream from every blade
Revealing airy shapes arrayed,
In strife, with warriour-souls!

Thus—thus he woke his harp again;
A strange enthusiastick strain;
And kneeling on the naked ground,
Filled all the mountain echoes round:
Then swept the cords, as if to raise
The spirit of departed days!
That harper had an audience there—
In heaven, and earth, and in the air!
Then, bending o'er the cords, he smote
A thronging—bold—exulting note—
And stood erect!—then flashed the wires!
Then came the stormy clash of lyres!
And had ye heard the rolling song,
So full—triumphant—and so strong—
Ye never had believed that one
Thro' such a boundless theme could run.
It was the noise of countless wings!
Of countless harps!—with countless strings!
Of distant fifes—and echoing drums—
Of soldier-hymning when it comes

Upon the shifting breeze of night,
In farewells to the dying light,
When steeds are forth, and banners blaze
Unfolding in the sun's last rays—
  And squadrons o'er the plain are dashing—
And martial helms are nodding free
In youth's bold-hearted revelry—
And woman goes before the sight
In airy pageantry and light
  With shawl and high-plumed bonnet flashing!

  And then he filled the sunset sky
With lightly springing melody,
Then shook the wires! and along
There went the huntsman's bugle-song:
And lo, aloft its silvery cry
  Ran clear and far, and cheerily!
And then the pipe! while o'er the sky—
Where laughing babes were heard to fly—
  Sweet bells ran gingling merrily!
His song is heard—a full dark eye,
And cheek of health's own mountain dye,
  Are brightening to his minstrelsy;
A heart is swelling, and the sigh
That lingers as it passes by,
  Proclaims entrancing extacy!
And these are now the words he sings—
That leap so proudly from his strings:

THE MINSTREL.

Oh waken, my Harp! to the marching of song!
Oh scatter the clouds that are brooding around thee:
Look forth in thy might, while the tempest is strong,
Nor reel in thy strength, as thou movest along,
Sublime on the winds, where my young spirit found thee!
O, loosen thy numbers in pride,
Let them triumph along on the tide,
That bears the last links of the fetters that bound thee!
Away with the pall that envelops thy form!
Abroad o'er the hills let thy genius storm:
O burst the bright garlands that shrine thee!
O scatter thy jassamine blossoms in air!
And the Tempest herself shall twine thee,
Of the long wild grass, and the mountain's rank hair—
A wreath that is worthy the brow of Despair!
Such chaplets at night, in the wind, I have seen,
On the rock-rooted fir, and the blasted green,
That tell where the anger of heaven hath been:
When a thick blue light on their barrenness hung;
When the thunders pealed, and the cliff-tops rung;
And the bending oak in the cold rain swung.

The Harper paused—the clouds went past,
In pomp upon the rising blast:

The Harper's eye to heaven is raised,
And all the lustres that had blazed,
In triumph o'er his pallid brow,
Have with the sunset faded now:
And now his eye returns to earth,
And solemn melodies have birth;
And lo, a distant mournful sound,
Goes wandering thro' the caverns round:
Such symphonies, are some times heard
From some sweet melancholy bird,
That sings her twilight song alone,
As if her heart sent forth a tone:—
In summer dreaming, ye may hear
Such singing gently pass the ear,
And hold your breath till it hath gone—
Then wonder as the song is done—
That ye can be so soon alone:—
Or start to find the glittering tear
Upon the mossy turf appear:—
Or in your visions when ye see
Some angel-harp, in extacy,
  Awakened by an angel wing,
When every plume of glittering light,
Unfolding to the dazzled sight,
  Goes faintly o'er some quiet string!

Wild sounds but sweet! the silky tune
Of fairies playing to the moon;

That mounting to the rosy skies,
Like sky-larks on their freshest wing,
Forever mount, forever sing,
Louder, and louder as they rise.
Now loudly comes the song again,
A thronging and impatient strain.

THE MINSTREL.

Heave darkly now my harp—friend of my lonely hour!
Cold swell thy numbers!
Away with the trumpet song—the wintry requeim pour
The hymning for the dead—the rush of churchyard shower—
For she who loved thee!
She who moved thee!
She who proved thee!
In darkness slumbers!
O, who has not felt, in the dead of the night,
The breathing of some one near to him?
The waving of some fresh angel plume—
A vision of peace in an hour of gloom—
While a nameless wish on his heart sat light
And the net-work over its pulse grew tight.
As he thought of her who was dear to him!

And who has not wished that the day might never
Intrude on such innocent sleep?
And prayed that the vision might stay forever,
And who has not wakened to weep!

And who has not murmured—in agony too—
When the tenant of heaven away from him flew—
And he felt 'twas a vision indeed!
Such—such are the phantoms, my *days* pursue,
And will till my spirit is freed.

I wake from a trance on the cliff's stormy height,
While such visions are fading away from my sight—
And feel—while my senses are going astray—
Like one that can watch his own heart in decay—
Like a dreamer that's wandered uncovered in day!
And find, as I start from the spell that enthralled me,
That the voices and wings of the spirits that called me,
Are pageants that flit thro' the fire of the brain:—
Commissioned to waken my heart from its sleep—
To stir my young blood—till the maniac weep—
But commissioned—by Mercy—in vain—!
Nay—silence my harp!—the enchantment is near—
Her pinions are waving!—my Ellen, appear!

He paused—and then imploringly,
There went in lustre from his eye
A mute petition to the sky:
He turned and saw the dark-eyed maid;
And saw her drop a trembling tear—
Then on her breast his hand he laid,
As listening if its pulse betrayed
One added throb of doubt or fear.

Then—gazing on her downcast eye,
He shook his head reproachfully—
Put back her flowing raven hair,
And wiped the tear-drop glittering there,
And shook his own imperial brow,
And thanked her with his eye—
Then dropt her yielding hand—and now
His harp is pealing high!

And now a murmuring comes again,
A mournful—faint—and languid strain.

MINSTREL.

Nay—nay sweet girl—thou shalt not weep!
I'll wake my Ellen's summer sleep:
This is the strain she bid me sing,
When I would hear her angel wing.
A low—sweet symphony then fell
From each calm wire, as if a spell
In musick might be spoken!
'Twas like the breath of evening's shell
When faintly comes its faintest swell,
Or fairy note from flow'ret bell,
When some young insect's golden cell
By careless touch is broken!
And then was heard like singing air
This adjuration trembling there.

ADJURATION.

O come on the beam of the night, love!
O, come on the beam of the night!
While the stars are all busy and bright, love:
O, come with thy tresses of light!

Away thro' the air we will go, love,
Where the waters of melody flow, love:

Where all the fresh lilies are blowing;
Where the turf is all mossy and green, love;
Where the fountains of heaven are flowing,
And the skies are all blue and serene love.

O, come with thy plumage of light, love,
And we will embrace in our flight, love.

O, come to my desolate heart, love,
And smile on the clouds that are there,
And, let us together depart, love,
And sing on our way thro' the air.

O, come, let us hasten away love—
Where spirits may worship and pray love.

O, come on the beam of the night, love!
O, come on the beam of the night!
While the stars are all busy and bright, love,
O, come with thy tresses of light!

Then with a glance of fire he rose,
And this—a fiercer hymning rose:

This harp hath lain long unforgotten in gloom;
And the roses that wreathed it have lost all their bloom,
Since it brightened and trembled at home:
The swell of whose heaven, and smile of whose day,
First tempted its song on the breezes to stray:
The air of whose mountains first taught it to play,
And the wind from the surge, as it tumbled in foam,
First challenged its numbers in storm to roam.

For the night of the heart, and of sorrow is o'er it,
And the passionate hymn that in other days tore it,
With her, who so oft to the green bower bore it:
Have gone like the moonlighted song of a dream!
Like the soul of an eye that hath shed its last beam!
And the tendrils of lustre that over it curled,
With the dark eye that gave all its wanderings birth,
All gone—like a cherubim-wing that is furled—
And left me alone—all alone in the world—
With nothing to worship or sing to on earth!

Yet—yet o'er the mountains my country appears:
And to her I will waken my lyre:
Perhaps it may brighten again, tho' in tears,
And the being it sang to in long vanished years,
May come in my visions of fire!

Ah, though she has gone—that young hope of my heart!
Still she thinks of the nights when I played to her,
When my sighs, like the souls of the blest would depart,
As I knelt by my harp and prayed to her,

O, yes—tho' thou art gone, my love,
Thou'lt know the lay—for none could move
Thy pulse like him, who sings this song—
Its throbs delay—subdue—prolong—
For they were so obedient still,
They fluttered faintly at his will,
Thy heart and soul, and thought kept time
Like angels to some heavenly chime;
Now lightning darted from thine eye:
As bright as ever cleft the sky;
And now in rich dissolving dew—
They darkly swam like heaven's own blue;
Now bent to earth—now flashing bright:—
Now fainting—fading on the sight—
Like cherub eyes that weep in light;
O, yes thou'lt know the lay again,
And weep to hear my harp complain;
Spirit! I know thou wilt, for ye
Can never lose such memory:—
It was the nursling of thy heart,
And never—never will depart;
And as for mine—it was such pride,
To catch thy dark-eye's glorious tide—
And feel it thro' my arteries glide:

Or fade like twilight's lovely ray,
Or fountains at the close of day,
That I could sing my heart away,
To such a spirit would it stay!

The Harper paused: his numbers died:—
The mountain-nymph was by his side:
Unconscious that the mighty spell,
Which drew her to his lonely cell,
Was strengthening as she heard this song,
Go so complainingly along,
For let him sing of what he might:
Of heaven or sunshine—storms or night—
The battle—earthquake— or the bed
Of honour—rapture—or the dead:—
Her swelling heart—her glistening lash—
The sudden breath—the sudden flash—
Proclaimed how well the charm was wrought,
How surely was her young heart caught.

Again he smote his sounding lyre,
Again his arm to heaven was raised;
His robe was forth! and prouder—higher
He rang his trumpet notes of fire;
Until his very spirit blazed!
And from his eye of lustrous night,
There went—uninterrupted light!
And thus he chanted to the rude
Omnipotence of Solitude.

Switzerland of Hills! Thou muse of Storms,
Where the cloud-spirit reins the bursting forms
Of airy steeds—whose meteor-manes float far
In lightning tresses o'er the midnight car
That bears thine angels to their mountain war!

Home of the earthquake! land where Tell
Bared his great bosom to his God, and fell,
Like his own Alpine-torrent, on his country's foe;
Land of the unerring shaft and warriour-bow
The upward Eagle—and the bounding Doe:—
The shaggy wolf—and the eternal flow
Of cloud-nursed streams, and everlasting snow.

Switzerland! my country! 'tis to thee
I rock my harp in agony:—
My country! nurse of Liberty,
Home of the gallant, great and free,
My sullen harp I rock to thee.

O, I have lost ye all!
Parents—and home—and friends:
Ye sleep beneath a mountain-pall:
A mountain-plumage o'er ye bends.
The cliff-yew in funereal gloom,
Is now the only mourning plume
That nods above a peoples' tomb.

Of the echoes that swim o'er thy bright blue lake,
And deep in its caverns, their merry bells shake,

And repeat thy young huntsman's cry:
That clatter and laugh, when the goat-herds take
Their browsing flocks at the morning's break
Far over the hills—not one is awake
In the swell of thy peaceable sky.

They sit on that wave with a motionless wing;
And their cymbals are mute; and the desart birds sing
Their unanswered notes, to the wave and the sky—
One startling, and sudden—unchangeable cry,
As they stoop their broad wing and go sluggishly by:
For deep in that blue-bosomed water is laid,
As innocent, true, and as lovely a maid
As ever in cheerfulness carolled her song,
In the blythe mountain air, as she bounded along.
The heavens are all blue, and the billows bright verge
Is frothily laved by a whispering surge,
That heaves incessant, a tranquil dirge
To lull the pale forms that sleep below,
Forms—that rock as the waters flow.

That bright lake is still as a liquid sky,
And when o'er its bosom the swift clouds fly,
They pass like thoughts o'er a clear blue eye!

The fringe of thin foam that their sepulchre binds,
Is as light as the cloud that is borne by the winds;
While over its bosom the dim vapours hover,
And flutterless skims the snowy-winged plover:
Swiftly passing away—like a hunted wing,
With a drooping plume—that may not fling

One sound of life—or a rustling note—
O'er that sleepless tomb—where my loved ones float.

Oh cool and fresh is that bright blue lake,
While over its stillness no sounds awake:
No sights—but those of the hill-top fountain
That swims on the height of a cloud-wrapped mountain—
The basin of the rainbow-stream,
The sunset gush—the morning-gleam—
The picture of the poet's dream.
Land of proud hearts! where Freedom broods
Amid her home of echoing woods
The mother of the mountain floods—
Dark, Goldau is thy vale;
The spirits of Rigi shall wail
On their cloud-bosomed deep as they sail
In mist where thy children are lying—
As their thunders once paused in their headlong descent,
And delayed their discharge—while thy desert was rent
With the cries of thy sons who were dying.
No chariots of fire on the clouds careered:
No warriour-arm, with its falchion reared:—
No death angel's trump o'er the ocean was blown:
No mantle of wrath o'er the heaven was thrown;
No armies of light—with their banners of flame—
On neighing steeds—thro' the sunset came,
Or leaping from space appeared!
No earthquakes reeled—no Thunderer stormed:
No fetterless dead o'er the bright sky swarmed:
No voices in heaven were heard!

But the hour when the sun in his pride went down
While his parting hung rich o'er the world:
While abroad o'er the sky his flush mantle was blown,
And his red-rushing streamers unfurled;—

An everlasting hill was torn
From its eternal base—and borne—
In gold and crimson vapours drest
To where——a people are at rest!

Slowly it came in its mountain wrath,
And the forests vanished before its path:
And the rude cliffs bowed—and the waters fled—
And the living were buried, while over their head
They heard the full march of their foe as he sped
And the valley of life—was the tomb of the dead!

The clouds were all bright: no lightnings flew:
And over that valley no death-blast blew:
No storm passed by on his cloudy wing:
No twang was heard from the sky-archer's string—
But the dark, dim hill in its strength came down,
While the shedding of day on its summit was thrown,
A glory all light, like a wind-wreathed crown—
While the tame bird flew to the vulture's nest,
And the vulture forbore in that hour to molest—

The mountain sepulchre of all I loved!
The villages sank—and the monarch trees
Leaned back from the encountering breeze—
While this tremendous pageant moved!

The mountain forsook his perpetual throne—
Came down from his rock—and his path is shown—
In barrenness and ruin—where
The secret of his power lies bare—
His rocks in nakedness arise:
His desolation mock the skies.

Sweet vale—Goldau! farewell—
An Alpine monument may dwell
Upon thy bosom, O, my home!
But when the last dread trump shall sound
I'll tread again thy hallowed ground—
Sleep thee, my loved one, sleep thee!
While yet I live, I'll weep thee—
Of thy blue dwelling I'll dream wherever I roam,
And wish myself wrapped in its peaceful foam.

Sweet vale—Goldau—farewell!
My cold harp, cease thy swell—
Till tuned where my loved ones dwell,
My home!—Goldau! farewell!

THE END.

Battel of Niagara

Battel of Niagara

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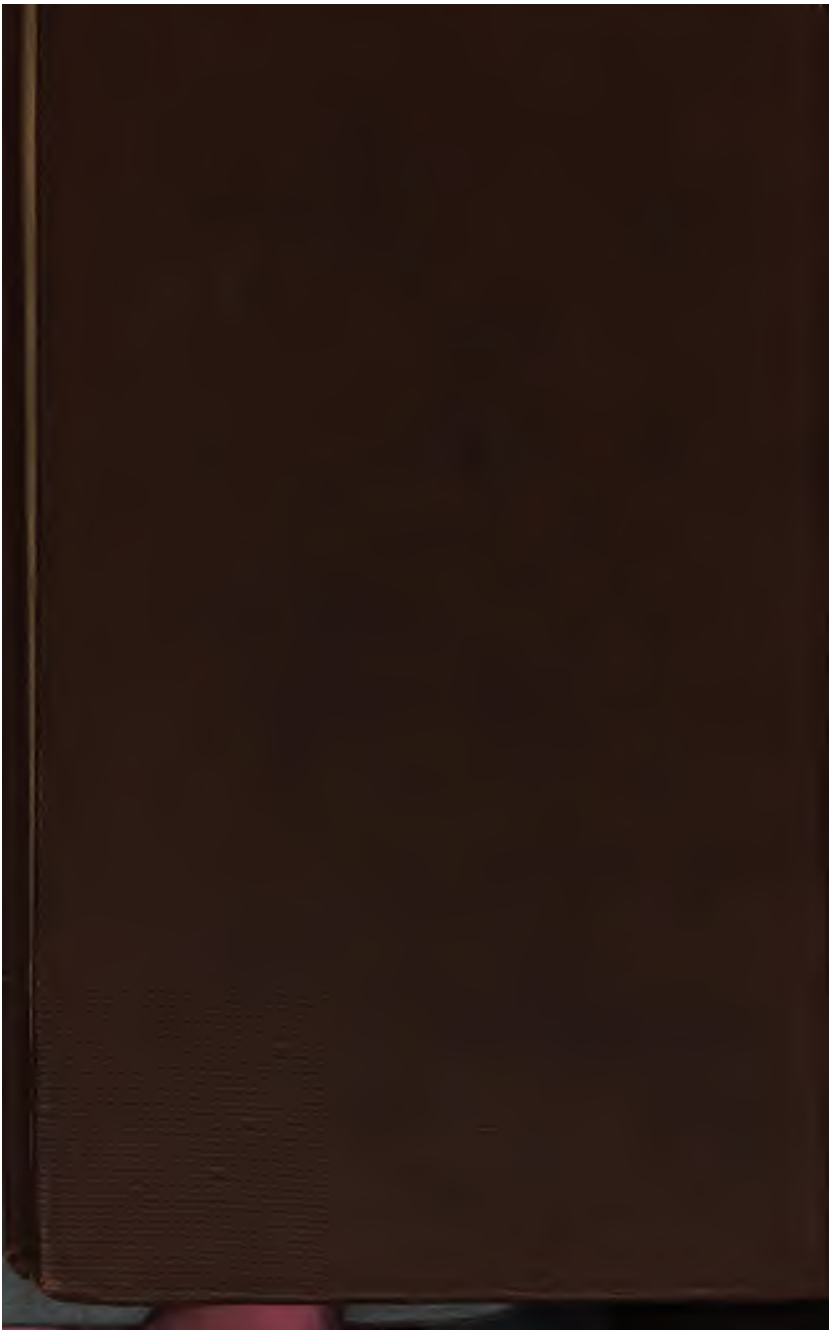
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